



McSutton





A
PRACTICAL EXPOSITION

OF THE
GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. JOHN,

IN THE FORM OF

LECTURES,

INTENDED TO ASSIST THE PRACTICE OF DOMESTIC
INSTRUCTION AND DEVOTION.

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CONTENTS.

LECTURE I.—i. 1—3.	Page
The DIVINITY OF THE WORD, or Son of God, declared.	1
LECTURE II.—i. 4, 5.	
The Word declared to be the LIGHT AND LIFE OF THE SOUL of Man.	8
LECTURE III.—i. 6—11.	
JOHN THE BAPTIST, a witness of the Son of God. The Son of God REJECTED by those to whom he came.	14
LECTURE IV.—i. 12, 13.	
The PRIVILEGES of those who receive the Son, as sent of God for their salvation. They have the provision, the education, the inheritance of children.	21
LECTURE V.—i. 14.	
The WORD BECAME MAN. HIS GLORY, as seen by the apostles, and witnessed in the world.	27
LECTURE VI.—i. 15, 16.	
The SUFFICIENCY OF THE SON OF GOD to supply all the wants of his disciples.	36

LECTURE VII.—i. 17.

The old and new covenant contrasted. The use of THE LAW to the Christian. 40

LECTURE VIII.—i. 18.

Our KNOWLEDGE OF GOD derived through Jesus Christ; who has declared his JUSTICE and his MERCY. 47

LECTURE IX.—i. 19—28.

John Baptist's account of himself. He BAPTIZES. The origin and intent of BAPTISM. 52

LECTURE X.—i. 29—34.

John describes THE LAMB OF GOD. The meaning of that TYPE, considered. 58

LECTURE XI.—i. 35—51.

Andrew and Simon and others called as APOSTLES of Jesus. Especial mention of NATHANAEL. 63

LECTURE XII.—ii. 1—11.

The first MIRACLE performed in Cana of Galilee. Reflections upon MIRACLES. 69

LECTURE XIII.—ii. 12—25.

Jesus clears THE TEMPLE of those who profaned it, giving an example of religious zeal. 75

LECTURE XIV.—iii. 1—5.

Nicodemus is assured of the necessity of REGENERATION. REGENERATION considered and illustrated. 80

LECTURE XV.—iii. 6—8.

The necessity of regeneration through the operation of the Spirit. 89

LECTURE XVI.—iii. 9—15.

Discourse with Nicodemus continued. The type of THE BRAZEN SERPENT.	95
---	----

LECTURE XVII.—iii. 16—21.

Jesus declares to Nicodemus the merciful purpose of God in the REDEMPTION OF MANKIND. Why and by whom his mercy is REJECTED.	100
--	-----

LECTURE XVIII.—iii. 22—36.

John Baptist's testimony to Christ, as the author of eternal life to all who BELIEVE IN HIM.	106
--	-----

LECTURE XIX.—iv. 1—14.

Discourse with a woman of Samaria. Jesus describes the LIVING WATER which he gives to those who ask him.	111
--	-----

LECTURE XX.—iv. 15—26.

Jesus discloses himself to the Samaritan woman as the Christ ; and explains the SPIRITUAL WORSHIP which God requires.	117
---	-----

LECTURE XXI.—iv. 27—38.

Jesus discourses with his disciples on THE WORK which he was sent to accomplish, and on the HARVEST which he and they should gather.	123
--	-----

LECTURE XXII.—iv. 39—42.

The FAITH of the Samaritans ; first from REPORT, afterwards from PERSONAL CONVICTION.	129
---	-----

LECTURE XXIII.—iv. 43—54.

Jesus recovers a nobleman's son from a dangerous fever. An Emblem of the RECOVERY OF THE SOUL.	134
--	-----

LECTURE XXIV.—v. 1—9.

A LIKE EMBLEM, in the healing of the cripple at the pool of Bethesda.	139
---	-----

LECTURE XXV.—v. 10—14.

The cripple who had been healed at Bethesda, is warned to SIN NO MORE.	146
--	-----

LECTURE XXVI.—v. 15—27.

JESUS reasons with the Jews. His power TO BESTOW SPIRITUAL LIFE.	152
--	-----

LECTURE XXVII. v. 28, 29.

A RESURRECTION to eternal life or eternal death declared.	158
---	-----

LECTURE XXVIII.—v. 30—40.

THREEFOLD TESTIMONY to the divinity of Jesus. That of John the Baptist; of God the Father; of the Scriptures.	162
---	-----

LECTURE XXIX.—v. 41—47.

JESUS alleges their love of WORLDLY HONOUR as one reason why the Jews rejected the testimony concerning him.	168
--	-----

LECTURE XXX.—vi. 1—13.

Five thousand miraculously fed. FRAGMENTS OF TIME AND OPPORTUNITY to be gathered up for use.	173
--	-----

LECTURE XXXI.—vi. 14—21.

The disciples overtaken by a storm, are relieved by THE PRESENCE OF JESUS.	178
--	-----

LECTURE XXXII.—vi. 22—29.

Faith in Christ declared to be the WORK REQUIRED by God.	184
--	-----

LECTURE XXXIII.—vi. 30—40.

JESUS reveals himself as the BREAD OF LIFE: and declares the Father's will concerning those who believe in him.	190
---	-----

LECTURE XXXIV.—vi. 41—46.

Faith in Christ declared to be the work of God upon the heart. 196

LECTURE XXXV.—vi. 47—58.

Christ the BREAD OF LIFE. The metaphor explained. 201

LECTURE XXXVI.—vi. 59—71.

Many disciples leave the company of Jesus, on account of his
HARD SAYINGS. The apostles remain. . . . 206

LECTURE XXXVII.—vii. 1—8.

A discourse between Jesus and his brethren. The FRIENDSHIP OF
THE WORLD. 212

LECTURE XXXVIII.—vii. 9—18.

FAITH PROMISED to the honest and good heart. . . . 218

LECTURE XXXIX.—vii. 19—30.

The Jews convicted, as having no KNOWLEDGE OF GOD. . . 223

LECTURE XL.—vii. 31—39.

The Spirit which the believers in Christ shall receive, compared
to RIVERS OF WATERS. 229

LECTURE XLI.—vii. 40—53.

ENMITY OF THE PHARISEES towards Jesus, and those who ac-
knowledge him. 234

LECTURE XLII.—viii. 1—11.

The Woman taken in adultery released, and warned to SIN NO
MORE. 240

LECTURE XLIII.—viii. 12—24.

Jesus declares to the Jews the consequence of their REJECTING
HIM. 246

LECTURE XLIV.—viii. 25—32.

Jesus promises to those who receive the truth, freedom from the
POWER OF THE WORLD, and the FEAR OF DEATH. . 253

LECTURE XLV.—viii. 33—36.

Freedom from the YOKE OF SIN conferred by Christ upon his
disciples. 259

LECTURE XLVI.—viii. 37—47.

The CHILDREN OF GOD distinguished from the CHILDREN OF
SATAN. 265

LECTURE XLVII.—viii. 48—59.

Jesus defends himself against the charge of BLASPHEMY. 271

LECTURE XLVIII.—ix. 1—12.

BLIND MAN healed at the pool of SILOAM. 276

LECTURE XLIX.—ix. 13—34.

Inquiry of the Pharisees into the case of the man who had received
his sight. Their PREJUDICE. 282

LECTURE L.—ix. 35—41.

The HAUGHTY AND SELF-RIGHTEOUS SPIRIT of the Pharisees. 288

EXPOSITORY LECTURES.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. JOHN.

LECTURE I.

IMMEDIATELY after the account given by St. Matthew of the beginning of our Lord's ministry, (iv. 17,) he proceeds to tell us, that Jesus walking by the sea of Galilee, after calling Simon Peter and his brother Andrew, "saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee (whose wife was Salome) and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them: and they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him."

John therefore was with the Lord from the first, and had every opportunity of hearing him. He was one of the three (James his brother and Peter being the others) who were chosen to attend him on many particular occasions: they witnessed, for instance, his agony in the garden, and his transfiguration. He is also distinguished as "the disciple whom Jesus loved:" whom he honoured with his

particular confidence : so that, during the last supper, Peter suggests that he should be the person to ask who it was that “ should betray him.” To him, too, from the cross, Jesus recommended the care of his surviving mother.

These circumstances give to the Gospel of St. John a particular interest. We cannot read it without perceiving that he wrote with a different object from the other three Evangelists. Many secret things, which they had very slightly touched upon, God has been pleased to reveal to us by the pen of St. John. We have much need to pray, and to pray earnestly, that “ the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him : the eyes of our understanding being enlightened ; that we may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance.”¹

THE DIVINITY OF THE WORD, OR SON OF GOD, DECLARED.

JOHN i. 1—3.

1. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

2. *The same was in the beginning with God.*

¹ Eph. i. 17, 18.

3. *All things were made by him ; and without him was not any thing made that was made.*

The disciples of Christ had been already furnished, by the other writers of his history, with a sufficient account of his birth, and ministry, and the various circumstances of his life. These had described his miracles, had related his discourses : not all he did, nor all that he said ; but all that the Holy Spirit knew to be needful, that every sincere inquirer might be satisfied with truth, and instructed in doctrine : might possess all things “that pertain to life and godliness.”

But it still remained to “show, WHO HE WAS, who had said and done these things. They who believed in him, considered him to be the expected Messiah, the Son of God, the King of Israel. The apostles had from the first perceived and acknowledged this: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” But who, and of what nature was THE CHRIST? Was he a created being, like the angel which appeared to Daniel and to Mary? And in what sense is that term to be understood, THE SON OF GOD? For even Adam is so called, as having had no earthly father.²

Here, however, St. John plainly declares, that He who for us men, and for our salvation came down from heaven, was no created being : is not

³ “Enos was the son of Seth, who was the son of Adam, who was the son of God.” Luke iii. 38.

called the Son of God in any ordinary sense; but was possessed, in his own nature, of all the properties which essentially belong to God. It might have been otherwise, for any thing that appears. The Almighty might have endued with such a spirit as Jesus possessed, or with power like that which he displayed, another being who should be born as Jesus was born:—nothing resembling it ever had been seen, but there is nothing incredible in supposing it;—and men might have supposed it, and some probably did suppose it. St. John here assures us in clear terms that it was not so. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* In the beginning of all things, in the beginning of time, from all eternity—he *was*, he existed, who had now taken upon himself the nature of man. Wherever God was, he was: partaking of the same everlasting, uncreated nature. And therefore he is here described under a new term, *the Word*. That which passes our comprehension, because we have never seen or known the like, must be expressed to us by some term which is familiar to us, which we do understand. And therefore the *Son of God* is here represented as the *Word* of God. The word of a man discloses his thoughts, explains his mind, declares his will. The thoughts, the mind, the will of God and of his “beloved Son,” are one. And accordingly Christ may properly be represented as the Word of God. For it is he

who makes known to us God's counsels and purposes, and has been to us as his word.³

But we are told more still. *All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.* All things were made by him, not independently of the Father, but in union with the Father. We know from the book of Genesis, that "in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." And we are here informed that in this exercise of his power the agent, the counsellor, was the Son, the Word, "who is the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person." "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." And so the apostle understands it: saying to the Ephesians and Hebrews, that "God created all things, by Jesus Christ:" "whom he hath appointed heir of all things, and by whom also he made the worlds."

Here we can know nothing, beyond what God reveals to us. Our reason tells us, that there must have been ONE from the beginning, ONE "before all things, and by whom all things con-

³ The plainest reason why this essential Son of God is styled *the Word*, seems to be this: that as our words are the interpretation of our mind to others, so was the Son of God sent to reveal his Father's mind to the world.—*Whitby*.

sist." Our reason agrees with the words of the Psalmist, "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands." But more than this we know not. We cannot "by searching find out" the nature or person of the Creator: and we can do no more than bow before him, and say, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." Thou hast created all things for thy pleasure. Yet would any have supposed this, who looked at the state of the world when Jesus came? who saw the thing made, ignorant of him who made it; who saw the creature estranged from his Creator? He, therefore, who had at first formed the earth for the use of man, and man to inhabit it, interposes once more. He who had said at first, "Let us make man after our own image, in our likeness;" now says again, Let us restore man to that image which he has lost, to that likeness which sin has defaced and deformed. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken:" hath spoken unto us by his Son, even by him who *was in the beginning with God, and was God*. And if you hearken to his call, and obey his word, the revelation here made by St. John is the strong foundation of your hope and comfort. If he to whom you have fled, and sought refuge from the wrath to come, is "God over all, blessed for ever;" his

greatness is your security. He who offers salvation, is not, as some would have it supposed, a prophet endowed with authority to reveal God's will, but still a mere man of nature like your own: but is **HE** who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God. Why should we deface the Scripture, blot out its clearest characters, and write it as it were anew, (as we must, if we endeavour to clear it from the divinity of Christ,) and so make a vain attempt to disprove this truth, this precious and consoling truth? For is there not solid comfort in the thought? 'True, he is man, with our nature to pity; but then he is also God, with infinite power to save. Such is the ground of the apostle's confidence. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is now at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

To him then bring your wants, he is merciful to relieve; to him disclose your fears, he is powerful to strengthen; on him lay the burthen of your sins, "he is able to save unto the uttermost those that come unto God by him." For *he was in the beginning with God, and was God; and without him was not any thing made that was made.*

LECTURE II.

THE WORD DECLARED TO BE THE LIGHT
AND LIFE OF THE SOUL OF MAN.

JOHN i. 4, 5.

4. *In him was life ; and the life was the light of men.*

5. *And the light shineth in darkness ; and the darkness comprehended it not.*

St. John had before declared that the eternal Word, whose incarnation is the subject of his Gospel, had been one with the Father from the beginning: and that “without him was not any thing made that was made.” He now adds, *In him was life*. On him life depended, and is by him imparted and communicated. “For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself: so the Son quickeneth whom he will.”¹

But *the life* here spoken of, is something more than that which was “breathed into man’s nostrils, and he became a living soul.”² *The life was the light of men*. It is the spiritual, and not the natural life which is the light of men. And this

¹ Ch. v. 26, 21.

² Gen. ii. 7.

life is in the Son, and is by him shed abroad upon the heart. Accordingly, in one of his epistles, this same evangelist describes him as “the Word of life:” (i. 1, 3;) “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of *the Word of life*, that which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you.” And justly is he so termed, who generates in the soul a new existence, springing up to immortality. He is to the soul, what light is to the body of man. If the eye be without light, how great is the darkness? But darker still the soul, without that light which proceeds from the Son of God, and enables it to answer the purposes for which it was created, and endued with understanding.

Some seeds of this divine life, some sparks of this heavenly light, had always been scattered in the world. As it is in nature, before the actual rising of the sun, certain beams of light are visible, and however inadequate to all our wants, serve many useful purposes: so was it with that spiritual light which had now fully risen. It had long been glimmering in dim and partial rays before the prophet’s words received their certain accomplishment, before it could be said of Jerusalem, “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.”³

³ Isa. lx. 1.

It was by that earlier light that some of the heathen, wiser than their fellows, and emerging out of the general ignorance, were led to "seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him."⁴ As certain of their poets said, "For we are also his offspring." Led by this light, they worshipped the powers which they perceived to be above them, though they worshipped they knew not what: so that Paul, as he "passed by and beheld their devotions, found an altar with this inscription, To the unknown God."⁵ And much further would that light have conducted them, if they had not too often quenched it, because they "did not like to retain God in their knowledge."⁶

Still more among the Jewish people *this life was the light of men*. Many had come to the light; had received life, had feared God, and wrought righteousness, "looking for glory, and honour, and immortality." It was by this light that "Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." It was by this light that Enoch walked with God: that Abraham obeyed the call of God, and left his country and his kindred, looking for a better habitation, eternal in the heavens. It was by this light that Moses was enabled to look beyond the pleasures of sin for a season, which he might have enjoyed at the court of Pharaoh, and "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches

⁴ Acts xvii. 27, 28.

⁵ Acts xvii. 23.

⁶ Rom. i. 28.

than the treasures in Egypt." It was by this light that many prophets and righteous men, "of whom the world was not worthy, died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."⁷

But still there was too just cause to say, as St. John goes on to add, *The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.* The law was but "a shadow of good things to come,"⁸ and could not be compared with "the very image of the things," which had now been manifested to the world. Prophecy was as "a light that shineth in a dark place;"⁹ and even they who uttered it, desired to see the things which were now seen, and had not seen them: "inquired and searched diligently, searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."¹ The vast scheme undertaken by the Son of God, when he "came to give his life a ransom for many," could be but obscurely perceived and imperfectly understood, before the facts threw light upon the predictions. The state of man, in regard to the things of God, in regard to present duties and future prospects, is exactly described in this expressive verse,

⁷ See Heb. xi. 4, 5, 8, 26, 13.

⁸ Heb. x. 1.

⁹ 2 Peter i. 19.

¹ 1 Peter i. 11.

The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not. Certain rays were discovered amid the general gloom, which glimmered, and shed forth a partial light, but did not disperse the darkness. There was not total ignorance, yet there was no clear knowledge.

It is a melancholy thought, that this description too well suits even the present condition of the world, which is now “without excuse.” “The times of that ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent.”² The dim light, the uncertain knowledge of the Jewish patriarchs, could not be imputed to them as sin. But, alas! what must we now say for the wilful darkness of those who close their eyes against the light, which shines in all its lustre! How does the account here given by St. John of the Redeemer condemn their indifference and apathy! He has himself said, “If I had not come and spoken unto you, ye had not had sin; but now ye have no cloke for your sin.”

He who was in the beginning with God, and was God, undertakes the salvation of mankind; proposes a mighty scheme, determined “from the foundation of the world;” gives intimation beforehand, by the mouth of “holy men of God, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;” sends rays of prophetic light as messengers to prepare the way before him, and warn men to be on

² Acts xvii. 30.

the watch for “ the brightness of his rising.” Till at last “ the Sun of righteousness” is fully displayed, “ with healing on his wings ;” and a voice goes forth from one end of the earth to the other, “ Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.”

And well may we expect that this voice should be heard. For observe the certain inference which we must draw from what the Evangelist reveals concerning the Christ, the Son of God. We learn from it the miserable and ruined state of man : so ruined and miserable, that the same power must redeem life, which had given life ; the same divine person must create anew, who had at first created. He without whom nothing was made that was made, now comes to seek and to save that which was lost. Low, indeed, was the condition, which must needs be thus relieved and raised. Utter, surely must be the ruin which could only be thus recovered. O ! believe not, then, a deceived and deceitful world, which would tell you that man may be alienated from God, and yet be happy : unreconciled to his Maker and his Judge, and yet safe from danger. If he who comes to save, is he who *was in the beginning with God, and was God*, I want no other argument to prove the depth of ruin and of misery. I see it, in the majesty of the Deliverer. In the greatness of the Saviour, I read the greatness of man’s necessity. In the vastness of the sacrifice, I learn to calculate the weight of our debt, the

burthen of man's sin. And O learn to measure from it, too, the extent of your obligation. Which will be greatest, the heinousness of guilt or the extremity of loss, if we put this mercy from us, "count ourselves unworthy of eternal life," and "neglect so great salvation?"

Rather, may the gracious purpose which was designed, when "the Word was made flesh," be accomplished in us! "That we may know Him that is true," and "have fellowship with the Father through his Son Jesus Christ!"

LECTURE III.

JOHN THE BAPTIST, A WITNESS OF THE
SON OF GOD; WHO WAS REJECTED BY
THOSE TO WHOM HE CAME.

JOHN i. 6—11.

(Matt. iii. 1—12. Luke iii. 1—17.)

6. *There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.*

7. *The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the light, that all men through him might believe.*

8. *He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.*

9. *That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.*

So great an event as the appearance of the Son of God, the incarnation of the Eternal Word, could not take place without announcement. Many prophecies had gone out respecting him; expectation had been raised, even beyond the land in which he should be born; and there was a general idea of one “that should come, and redeem Israel.” And now that the proper season had arrived, according to the determinate counsel of God, an especial message was intrusted to John the son of Zacharias, that he might call the attention of the people to the “time of their visitation:” that he might “prepare the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight.” *He came to bear witness of the light*, which was no longer to shine in darkness, but to be openly held up to view; sufficient and ready to *light every man that cometh into the world.*

Yet all are not enlightened. From the beginning it had proved so: men close their eyes against the light which they possess. The description is too just which follows.

10. *He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.*

11. *He came unto his own, and his own received him not.*

The wisdom, the power, the goodness of the

Creator is manifest to the understandings of men. "He left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain and fruitful seasons."¹ Yet *the world knew him not*. "The world by wisdom," by its own wisdom, by rightly exercising the faculties which God had given, "knew not God their Creator."² The world at large was ignorant respecting him. The Jewish people to whom he had been clearly revealed, they had better knowledge, they had a purer faith: and when one came to them from the Father whom they professed to serve, it might be expected that they would eagerly follow him and hear him gladly. But no. *He came unto his own, to his chosen nation, his peculiar people, and his own received him not*. The Jewish nation in general, as we know, did not receive him as their Messiah: and even the people who had listened willingly to his discourses, and been relieved by the merciful exercise of his power, suffered him to be led to execution, while not a single voice was raised in his favour. "The Son of man goeth, as was determined of him!"

Let us however inquire, on what ground they received him not. Was it that he did not answer the predictions which had gone forth respecting him? We know that his lineage, his birth, his life, and his death, did fulfil the prophecies and

¹ Acts xiv. 17.

² 1 Cor. i. 21.

correspond with the types concerning him, in the most minute and remarkable particulars. Was it that he did not show such signs and wonders and mighty deeds, as were reasonably to be expected from the Messiah? It was acknowledged,—“This man doeth many miracles;”—“No man can do the miracles which thou doest, except God be with him;”—“He saved others,” though himself he did not save. Was it that his discourses and his doctrines were not in agreement with the character which he claimed? It was acknowledged, that “never man spake like this man:”—that “all men were astonished at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth:”—that “he taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes.” And yet *they received him not.* —

The reason was not in him, but in themselves. He came in a particular character. He came as a Saviour. He was announced as such by the angels. “Unto you is born this day a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” × For this he was promised, predicted, sent; for this he took our nature, ministered, and died; that he might redeem a lost world, and deliver a race which sin had ruined. Now, to receive one who comes in this character, and purports to be such a Saviour, requires a certain state of mind in those who so receive him. To receive one who offers deliverance, implies a sense of danger, a sense of destitution and helplessness. To receive redemption through Christ

Jesus, was to acknowledge a state of bondage and condemnation. To receive eternal life as the gift of God for his sake, was to cast themselves on his mercy, to abandon all personal claim, to renounce all procuring merit in themselves. X

The Jewish people perceived this ; against this their pride and their self-complacency revolted ; and for this cause they *received him not*. So St. Paul expressly shows, arguing to the Jews themselves in his epistle to the Romans. They lost, he says, the blessing offered them ; they did not *become the sons of God*, because they persisted in trusting to themselves, and refused to rely on Jesus as a Saviour. “ They being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.”³ The fifth chapter of this Gospel (ver. 39) supplies an example, where we find our Lord reasoning with the Jews around him. “ Search the Scriptures ; for in them ye think ye have eternal life : and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.” Here he addresses them as expecting eternal life, and thinking that they had it in their Scriptures ; but not rightly interpreting the Scriptures, and therefore not having salvation, because they refused it through him who is the author of it. “ Ye will not come to ME, that ye might have life.” Ye will not come

³ Rom. x. 3.

to the fountain, or ye might be cleansed. Ye withdraw yourselves from the physician, or ye might be healed. Ye will not seek the appointed door, or ye might enter in. Thus they maintained their self-dependence. They would not receive salvation “of grace.”† They would not humble themselves, that they might be exalted; but they would exalt themselves, and therefore they remained abased before God. They did not receive him, because of their proud, unhumbed, self-confident, self-justifying heart. They trusted in themselves, that they were righteous, and had need of nothing.

But more than this:—Jesus came as a Saviour not only from the guilt, but from the power of sin. “Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins.” While he invited them to receive eternal life, he also required them to repent; for “the wages of sin is death;”—to “bring forth fruits meet for repentance.”

And here, again, they stumbled. A deliverer from foreign yoke, a deliverer from Herod or the Romans, they would have gladly followed. But a deliverer from sin had no inducement for them. That yoke they had not felt heavy. They did not grudge the tribute which they paid to Satan.

We meet with an example in the eighth chapter of this Gospel. There our Lord discoursing

in the presence of a large company, said to some who believed on him, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." This saying offended his hearers. They answer,—“We be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?” They would not understand,—it did not suit them to understand,—that “whosoever committeth sin, is the servant of sin.” They did not understand,—nor care to understand,—that he alone who could renew the heart in righteousness and true holiness, could make them “free indeed.”

To receive him who required them to be, and who would make them, “poor in spirit,” and “pure in heart,” and lovers of righteousness, and merciful, and meek,—was to lay aside their pride, and their sensuality, and their love of this present world, and their covetousness. And therefore *they received him not*. And this was their condemnation: that light was come into the world; but they loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. This was their condemnation, that when *He came unto his own, his own received him not*. They rejected him, because of their proud, unhumiliated, unsubdued, self-confident, self-justifying heart. They depended on themselves that they were righteous, and “had need

of nothing ; and knew not that they were wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”⁴

Let their error be our warning ; their loss, our security. Let us learn to feel our own wretchedness, that we may gladly welcome deliverance ; let us acknowledge our helplessness, that we may gladly lean on him who is “ mighty to save.” “ Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God.”

LECTURE IV.

THE PRIVILEGES OF THOSE WHO RECEIVE THE WORD, AS SENT OF GOD FOR THEIR SALVATION.

JOHN i. 12, 13.

12. *But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name :*

13. *Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

It has been already stated, that when the Son of God came, he did not meet with acceptance. *He*

⁴ See Rev. iii. 17.

came unto his own, and his own received him not. It was necessary in the divine counsels, that the word of God should be first spoken to the Jews: but “they put it from them, and counted themselves unworthy of eternal life.” Yet not all. There were those who said, “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.” These opened their eyes to the evidence which proved him to be the Messiah. These neither opposed his doctrines, nor revolted from the redemption which he offered them. They closed with the mercy of God; they *believed in his name*; they *received him*; and, with him, they received the privilege which he alone can give, the “adoption of children,” and *became the sons of God.*

Became, were made, the sons of God. Were they not so before?

In one sense, all mankind are the sons of God. So Adam is called by St. Luke,¹ when he is tracing the line from which Joseph was descended. But the whole of the Jewish people were children of God in a higher sense. God sent a message to Pharaoh: (Ex. iv. 22:) “Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my first-born.” Accordingly Moses addresses the people in Deuteronomy, (xiv. 1,) “Ye are the children of the Lord your God.” Jesus recognizes them as such, distinguishing them from the Gentiles. (Matt. xv. 26.) “It is not meet to take the children’s bread and to cast

¹ Luke iii. 38.

it to dogs." And St. Paul speaks of the privilege enjoyed by his brethren; (Rom. ix. 4;) "Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the promises."

Yet still we find, that they were capable of, and required, a further and more special adoption. There is a higher privilege, which they could only possess as disciples of Christ Jesus: a privilege which those Jews forfeited, who, when he came, received him not; and to which those were raised, who did receive him, and believed in his name. *To as many as received him*,—to those who acknowledged the character in which he came, and accepted the redemption which he offered,—to those he assigned the blessings which he alone could give, and which in no other way they could enjoy. *To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.* God's children. "Ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." And justly are they so entitled. It is not a vain and empty term. For by the adoption given them, they have the provision, and the education, and the inheritance of children.

✱ 1. They have the provision of children. As the Father of all, God has provided for the whole race of man. He sends them rain and fruitful seasons: he causes his sun to shine, and his rain to fall, "on the just and on the unjust." But a very different provision is made for those who belong to the cove-

nant which is in Christ Jesus. They have the assurance that their God shall supply all their wants ; that all needful things shall be added to them : for their heavenly Father knoweth that they have need of all these things. / “ For even the hairs of their head are all numbered.”² The circumstances of their lives are so ordered, that all things work together for their good. If they are poor, it shall preserve them from temptation, and keep them humble ; if they are rich, it is that they may be “ rich in good works.” If they are in adversity, it is that they may enjoy a peace which this world cannot give. If they are in prosperity, it is that they may take comfort from the sunshine of God’s favour. Rich or poor, afflicted or prosperous, in health or in sickness, in life or in death, “ they are the Lord’s.”

2. Together with the provision, they have also the education of children. If they are the sons of God, they are “ led by the Spirit of God ;”³ and prepared by his grace for the glory which is to follow. He purifies them from the corruption of their natural descent, and renews them after his own image ; he withdraws their hearts from things below, and raises them to things above ; he uses exactly that discipline which their character most needs, whether gentle or severe : sometimes he chastens them, that they “ may bring forth more fruit ;” but still he “ dealeth with them as sons ;”

² See Matt. vi. 33. Phil. iv. 19.

³ See Rom. viii. 14.

“yea, spareth them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.”⁴

✱ 3. And in the end, they have the inheritance of children. “If they are children, then are they heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.”⁵ If they are children, they are the “blessed of the Father,” whose “good pleasure it is to give them the kingdom,” “the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world.”⁶ We need not know, or desire to know, more of this inheritance, than that it is worthy of the purchase of the blood of Christ; worthy of the promise of God’s everlasting covenant. It is an “inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.”⁷

Such are the privileges of those who are made the sons of God by faith that is in Christ Jesus. But who shall declare their generation? They *are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* It is not with their *spiritual* as with their *natural* birth: that comes of the will of the flesh, and of the will of man; but the spiritual being cannot be so handed down: God keeps it in his own power. The corruption of Adam descended in natural course to his posterity; but not so the grace of Adam, or of any since born his children: no man can produce it in another by his own means, or secure it for

⁴ See John xv. 2.

Heb. xii. 7. Mal. iii. 17.

⁵ Rom. viii. 17.

⁶ Matt. xxv. 34. Luke xii. 32.

⁷ 1 Pet. i. 4.

another by his will and desire. It is the gift of God. And though we know it is bestowed according to just and equal laws, we are often foiled and baffled, if we attempt to trace their operation.

Still, we know that, which it is of chief consequence to know. Though this birth is a secret thing, and of a spiritual nature, it is discerned by outward signs. It belongs to those who receive Christ Jesus. *To as many as receive him, to them gives he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name.*

Inquire, then, how it is with yourselves. It was shown in the last lecture, why the Jews received him not. When those reasons were pointed out, did your hearts reply, It is not so with us. On the contrary, we desire to be saved, "not having our own righteousness, but the righteousness which is of God by faith in Christ Jesus." We have "come to him, that we might have life," knowing that without him we were "dead in trespasses and sins." We do not complain that "if we are the sons of God," we must be "led by the Spirit of God." The promise is dear to us, that "if we continue in his word, we shall be made free,"—free from the dominion of sin. "Our rejoicing is this; the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity" we have received Christ Jesus for what he came to be: our PROPHET, to teach us the will of God; our PRIEST, to make propitiation for our sins; our LORD, to rule and direct our lives.

Blessed are they whose spirit bears witness with them that such is their case and state. And the more blessed, because “flesh and blood” has not put this new heart and right spirit within them, but the Father which is in heaven. If it was of flesh and blood; if it was of the *will of man*, and not of *God*,—it might fail “through their manifold temptations.” The corruption which they feel within, tells them it might fail, if it was of themselves. But this is their security;—that it is *not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God*. And none shall pluck them out of his hand. He that is the author, will be the finisher of their faith. “He that hath begun a good work in them, will perform it unto the end.”

LECTURE V.

THE WORD BECAME MAN. HIS GLORY AS
SEEN BY THE APOSTLES, AND WITNESSED
IN THE WORLD.

JOHN i. 14.

14. *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*

St. John, in the preceding verses, had declared the DIVINITY of the Redeemer. “The Word was God.” He now testifies, with the same clearness, a truth which equally concerns us, his HUMANITY. *The Word was made flesh.* He who was God, took upon him the nature of man: the nature of frail, mortal flesh. He did not cease to be what he was: he could not cease to be what he had been from eternity; but he became, what he was not before, man as well as God.¹

Let us consider, first, Is this possible?

Why should it not be possible? There seems no reason why the nature which is clothed with flesh should only be such a nature as our own. God, we know, breathed into man the breath of life, and he became a living soul. That soul might have partaken of his own nature, or of another different nature, instead of the nature which it has. The mode in which God and man became one, we cannot comprehend; but we need not go beyond ourselves, and the union of soul and body in our own natures, to meet with that which we shall never comprehend; and there is nothing contradictory in believing that as the living soul and body constitute one man, so God and man are one Christ. “For with God nothing shall be impossible.”

Secondly, does this agree with what had been

¹ As defined by the fourth General Council.—“He was so made flesh, that he ceased not to be the Word, never changing that he was, but assuming that he was not.”

foretold, and with what the Jewish nation, possessing the oracles of God, had reason to expect?

God had declared to Adam that "the seed" or offspring "of the woman should bruise the serpent's head."² Jesus was the offspring of the woman, Mary; and was now manifested to bruise the serpent's head, and to destroy the works of the devil.

Moses had assured the Israelites, that in due time, "The Lord their God should raise up unto them of their brethren a prophet like unto himself."³ And now the Word was made flesh, and "born of a woman," among this people.

Isaiah had prophesied concerning a Saviour, in words which could only apply to one who came in fashion as a man, and yet who was in his nature more than man:⁴ whose generation was incomprehensible: whose appearance was frail and humble, yet whose power was divine.

The appearance, therefore, of Christ in the flesh, did agree with the expectation raised by prophecy. And then we ask, thirdly, Was there a reason for it? Scripture explains the reason. Jesus came to save sinners, by dying the death of sinners. In the nature of God he could not die. He could not suffer, except in that nature which had sinned. He could only bear the curse of the law in the nature which had incurred the curse by trans-

² Gen. iii. 15.

³ Deut. x. viii. 15. See Acts xiii. 22.

⁴ Compare Isa. vii. and ix.

gression of the law. Forasmuch then as those whom he came to redeem “are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.”⁵

Therefore according to God’s power, and according to God’s determinate counsel, and for a reason which can be explained to us, “a body was prepared” for the Word:⁶ the Son of God “was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;”⁷ and *dwelt among us* in fashion as a man. “Without controversy great is the mystery; God manifest in the flesh.”⁸ Great is the mystery: but how much greater is the mercy!

And now the Evangelist adds, *We beheld his glory the glory, as of the only begotten of the Father.* Though he showed himself in the nature and weakness of man, he also showed himself in the glory of Almighty God. That while we can approach and lean upon the one, we may trust in and commit ourselves to the other. St. John says, “*We beheld his glory.*” St. John was one of those who enjoyed this privilege in a special degree. He was of that chosen party, which attended Jesus on

⁵ Heb. ii. 14—16.

⁶ Heb. x. 5.

⁷ Rom. i. 3.

⁸ 1 Tim. iii. 16.

mount Tabor, when he “was tranfigured before them, and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.”⁹ The intent, surely, of that manifestation, was to leave an impression upon the mind of the witnesses, which they should in time transmit to others. St. Peter used it for this purpose, saying, “We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.”¹

Such is the clear assurance left to us from those who spoke what they knew, and testified what they had seen. It has been handed down to us in uninterrupted order by successive generations of Christians. The apostles beheld it. To the different assemblies among which they went, “preaching the word,” they related what their “eyes had seen, and their hands had handled of the Word of life.”² And what was so witnessed and confirmed, the first companies of Christians received as true; and believed in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God: so that Peter could affirm of them, “Whom

⁹ Matt. xvii. 1, 2.

¹ 2 Peter i. 16—18.

² 1 John i. 1.

having not seen, ye love ; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”³ These, again, conveyed the word of truth to the generation that came after ; the leaven was gradually diffused ; the seed became a great tree, with its branches spread on every side, and “ its leaves for the healing of the nations.” But as the tree which may have stood for centuries, and which no man living has ever known except as a widely spreading and an ancient tree, was once a seed, and would never have existed at all if that seed had not been dropped into the ground : so with our Christian faith. The believers have multiplied ; ages have followed ages ; nation after nation has been added to the church : and the time seems far back since that church first began to be. Still there was at first a seed ;—and that seed was planted, when *the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth*, and the apostles beheld his glory.

In one way, that glory has been evidently beheld in every age that has since passed. For in every age that has since passed, multitudes have been brought, through the preaching of the word, “ from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God :” multitudes have given up their sinful practices and their worldly desires, and have laid them at the foot of the cross, and have “ received

³ 1 Pet. i. 8.

the gift of the Holy Ghost," so as to become "a peculiar people," living to the glory of God, and adorning the doctrine of the Saviour. Men "see their good works," see "their light shining;" and they behold in this a testimony, a glorious evidence of the gospel. A testimony was given which it was impossible to resist, when as Saul was on his way to Damascus, a light shone suddenly from heaven "above the brightness of the sun," and struck the persecutor with blindness. But a few days after, was Saul himself a less convincing spectacle, when praying for direction to him whom he had so lately persecuted, and preaching the doctrine which before he destroyed?⁴ The voice which came out of the cloud was astonishing, when it said, "This is my beloved Son, hear him." But the dying voice of the Christian Stephen was equally convincing, when, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, he knelt down and prayed, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!" "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!"⁵

These, however, are extraordinary cases. We need not go so far back, we need not appeal to extraordinary interpositions of divine power, to see proofs of the glory of Christ, or to be convinced by the evidence which it supplies. Every member of the fold of Christ bears about him testimony to his Shepherd's faithfulness, and truth, and power.

⁴ See Acts ix. 3—22.

⁵ Acts vii. 59, 60.

I know not what evidence can be stronger. When we see an individual of the Jewish nation, we see an undeniable proof of the truth of the Bible history, and of the prophecies it contains. So when we behold a true and consistent Christian, we possess the same evidence of all that the gospel says of the mercy of God, the divinity of Christ, and the power of the Spirit. What can be a greater miracle, than one who has his dealings here on earth, and his conversation in heaven: who is dead to the things with which he is daily and hourly conversant, and whose "life is hid with Christ in God?" Surely this is not natural. Especially when we remember the temptations of that world to which he is crucified, and the corruption of that heart which he is subduing, and the rebellious lusts of the flesh which he habitually mortifies.

We have reason to be thankful, that these evidences of the glory of Christ have never failed. We may see them, in those around us; nay, we may possess them in ourselves: and let none be satisfied unless he does possess this inward testimony. Every one possesses it, who, through faith in the Son of God, is renewed after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness, and enabled to escape the corruption which is in the world. And God has put this proof within the power of every one: "He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself:" has it in the consciousness of his heart and the obedience

of his life. This is a sure record ; and this is the true faith, and eternal life.

I conclude with a single reflection : *The Word was made flesh.* For what purpose ? “ For us men and for our salvation.” He descended to our nature, that he might exalt us to his. He was made flesh, that we might be raised above the flesh, and become “ partakers of the divine nature.” He became the Son of man, that we might become the sons of God. But to what end, if we still remain carnal, earthly, sensual ? Know ye not that the unrighteous, the unholy, the ungodly, “ shall not inherit the kingdom of God ?” If it could be so, if an unsanctified, unrenewed nature, could be admitted to the presence of God and the glory of his power, what need was there that the Word should be made flesh and dwell amongst us ?

Therefore “ cleanse yourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.” “ Mortify your members which are upon the earth :” and “ glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.” For “ if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die ; but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live ;” shall live for ever.

LECTURE VI.

THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE SON OF GOD
TO SUPPLY ALL THE WANTS OF HIS
DISCIPLES.

JOHN i. 15, 16.

15. *John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me.*

16. *And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.*

The purpose of John the Baptist's mission was to prepare the way for him of whom he spake. He of whom he spake was come, and was now ready to enter upon his ministry. John therefore must be superseded, and retire before the presence of Jesus, of whom he was the forerunner: just as the morning star, which shines so brightly before dawn, disappears when the sun rises in the heavens.

And now the evangelist proceeds to describe the benefits of his light; his blessed influence upon the world. His divine nature, his eternal existence, his omnipotence, had been before declared. "In the beginning was the Word; and the Word was with God; and the Word was God." But this might be, and yet no advantage be derived to man. The mine may be rich; full of gold or

precious stones : but what is this, unless the mine is open to us, and we have access to the treasure ? To the treasure which is laid up in Christ, all who believe in him have access. The apostles had already proved this ; and St. John speaks his own experience, when he writes, *of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.*

It was *from his fulness* that these unlearned and ignorant men had received “ a mouth and wisdom,” which all their “ adversaries had not been able to resist.”² He had supplied their answer to the high priest and elders. It was not in their own strength, which had been proved weakness : but in the might of their Master they had said, (Acts iv. 19,) “ Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.”

It was *from his fulness* that they had been enabled to perform works exceeding the power of man : as Peter declared (Acts iii. 16) after the healing of the cripple, “ His name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong : yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.”

“ It was from the supply *of his fulness* that Paul could dare to say, (1 Cor. i. 4, 5,) “ I thank my

¹ *Χαριν ἄντι χάριτος.* A double measure of grace ; grace increasing by successive degrees.

² Luke xxi. 15.

God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ: that in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge.”

Still if this abundant grace had been poured out upon the apostles only, those who believe in Christ “through their word” would read of it with little interest. It would not concern them. But when St. John says, that *of his fulness have all we received*, he speaks in the name of all successive believers. He means that Christ is the fountain from which all may supply their need. “Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” “Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.” This is expressed in many ways in Scripture. Sometimes Christ is the stem, which furnishes the sap of life to all his branches. Sometimes he is the stream, which pours forth its perpetual supply.³ Sometimes he is the treasury, in which “it has pleased God that all fulness should dwell:” “in whom are laid up all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge:”⁴ and these he dispenses by his Spirit, “dividing to every man severally as he will.” Thus he recovers them from their lost estate, and repairs the ruins of the fall.

³ John xv. 4; vii. 37.

⁴ Col. i. 19; ii. 3.

Observe the richness of the treasure, observe the copiousness of the stream. Do we want pardon? There are none who do not need it: but even where it is most urgently needed, *of his fulness* it may be received. He has made a full, perfect, and sufficient satisfaction for the sins of all that believe. Even the malefactor upon the cross was permitted to find that “the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin.”

Do we require knowledge? He is “the light of the world.” He has revealed to us all that is most valuable to learn. He has given us an acquaintance with God, an acquaintance with ourselves; he has told us the nature of this world and the nature of the world to come: he has told us on whom God will have mercy, and on whom he will not have mercy: he has abundantly fulfilled the expectation which had gone forth concerning him; “when Messiah cometh, which is called Christ, he will tell us all things.”⁵

Or do we need a power which we have not in ourselves, to subdue our natural sinfulness, to keep down indwelling sin, and to renew the heart after the image of God? He is the source of all spiritual victory: and God would have us trust to the fulness of his strength, that we may receive *grace for grace*, grace in abundant and increasing measure. Thus living upon him in perpetual dependence,

⁵ John iv. 25.

the disciples maintain a continued intercourse with their master, the soldiers with their captain, the servants with their Lord.

Here then must be sought whatever is wanted of grace and spiritual knowledge. Independently of Christ Jesus we have nothing : as he himself declares, “ Without me ye can do nothing.” With him we have every thing. As it is written again, “ He that abideth in me, the same bringeth forth much fruit ;” and as Paul has left on record, “ I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” Let no one boast : for “ what hath he which he hath not received ?” “ Our sufficiency is of Christ.” Let no one despair ; for who has ever come to him in penitence and faith, and been cast out, or found his truth to fail ?

LECTURE VII.

THE OLD AND NEW COVENANT CONTRASTED.—THE USE OF THE LAW.

JOHN i. 17.

17. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

A comparison is here drawn between the first and second dispensation. And the difference is

strongly marked by the circumstances attending them.

The law was given by Moses. Moses was a highly favoured servant of God, selected to communicate his will to the chosen nation. Yet he was a man ; one of the fallen race of Adam. *But grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.* God, having a design of mercy, sent forth his Son—his well-beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased :—and he, “the mighty Lord,” was proclaimed as “the Prince of peace.”

Again, when Moses was summoned to receive the declaration of God’s purposes, Mount Sinai burned with fire ; blackness, and darkness, and tempest surrounded it, and there was heard “the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words ; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more : and so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake.”¹ But the *grace and truth* which *came by Jesus Christ* was characterised by its different announcement. All was condescension in God, and comfort to mankind. “Fear not ; I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.” “Glory to God in the highest ; on earth peace, good will towards men.”

Still it was an advantage which we must not undervalue, that *the law was given by Moses* to the Israelites. It was an “advantage, great every

¹ Heb. xii. 18—21.

way, that unto them were committed the oracles of God." God did not pass them by: or give them up, like other nations, "to a reprobate mind," ignorant of him and of his will. They were taught "his statutes and his judgments, which if a man do, he shall continue in them." And they were many, more than we pretend to number, who were thus led to "do justice, and love mercy, and walk humbly with their God," and to direct their lives "according to the commandments and ordinances of the law."

What, however, would be the effect of this law of God, if we had no other revelation of his will? What, but to condemn all mankind? As the apostle says, to "conclude all under sin," that "every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God?" This law, whether given to the Israelites by Moses, or repeated by Jesus in his discourses, may all be summed up, as he has himself summed it up, under these two heads: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart; and thy neighbour as thyself." And who can hold up his hand and affirm, I am guiltless of any transgression against these laws?

If then the terms of the law are these; (and these must be the terms of every law;) "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all the things which are written in the book of the law to do them:"¹—it is clear that "by the law is the know-

¹ See Galat. iii. 10.

ledge of sin :” that “ by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified :” and we have eternal reason to be thankful, that *grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*. The apostle has taught us how to feel and reason : saying, “ The strength of sin is the law : but thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

It is right to be often reflecting upon this : to call to mind, how many things we have done which we ought not to have done : how many things we have left undone that we ought to have done : and that our only comfort must be, “ By grace are ye saved ;” “ by Jesus Christ all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.” Thus the law is used by the Spirit to “ convince of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment ;” becomes “ a schoolmaster,” a mighty teacher, “ to bring us unto Christ :” to awe the transgressor into a thankful acceptance of his mercy. In earthly cases, we often find the criminal hardened in his denial of guilt, confident of escape, sullen, obstinate : but when an unexpected witness appears against him, and his guilt is clearly shown, his spirit fails, his conscience shrinks, and the terror of death subdues, if it does not soften him. The effect of the law upon our hearts should be of a like nature : should be to soften them, now, in time, that we may not at last fall into the hands of

an unpropitiated God. It seems to say, why contend and dispute against God? You cannot change him who is unchangeable: you cannot alter his will, which is fixed from everlasting upon the pillars of eternal right: but you may reject his counsel against yourself, (it is but too possible,) you may despise his mercy, and then, too late, experience his anger. Whether you will hear, or whether you will forbear, you must submit to die, and stand before God, to be judged by that law which he has ordained. “Woe to him that striveth with his Maker!” Repent, and return unto the Lord: there are still the means of peace and reconciliation: *grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*: cast upon him your burthen, and find rest unto your soul.

Therefore as the demand of the law is perfect obedience, so the offer of Christ is perfect forgiveness. Perfect obedience no man has paid or can pay. Perfect forgiveness every one may enjoy who seeks to be accepted through the righteousness which is of God by faith. The two covenants have this great distinction. One is command, the other is mercy: mercy which assures us, that though man had transgressed the covenant of command, God had still in store a covenant of grace; that though man had fallen far short of the obedience which God required, God has not altogether cast off his unworthy servants. “Herein was love,

not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and while we were yet sinners has reconciled us to himself by the death of his Son."

But here a question meets us, which occurred to St. Paul, when arguing in this same strain. "Wherefore then serveth the law?"² Are we at liberty to disparage it, to neglect it? God forbid. Think not, said our Lord himself, foreseeing what might be alleged, "think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."

And there are three uses which the law serves, all which tend to establish the Christian character; there are three considerations which it suggests to the mind, all which we must attentively cherish.

We read the commandments of the law, as Moses gave them to the Israelites. The Lord Jesus enforced them, explained them, extended them, showed that the spirit of them, and not the letter only, must be fulfilled. The apostles still further point out their bearing upon the heart and life.

The first thought should be, This is God's will respecting me. My Saviour kept all these laws perfectly. Not that I might not keep them, but that he might leave me an example as well as an injunction, to follow his steps and walk as he walked. These, then, are to be my rule; and by

² Gal. iii. 19.

these I must exercise myself, that I may “keep a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man.”

The second thought is of another nature. These are the commands of God. This law, is His law—my Maker’s law. What could be my hope, if he were to reward me according as I had kept it from my youth up? If that were to be my “righteousness, that I had continued in all the things that are written in the law to do them?” Thanks be to him, who has redeemed me from the curse of the law: whom God has made to me “wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”

And, lastly, consider within yourselves, Do I keep these commandments? Do I allow myself in the wilful neglect of any of them? Is it my aim, my desire, my prayer, to love the Lord my God with all my heart, and my neighbour as myself? To bring every thought, word, and wish, into captivity to the obedience of Christ? Do I bring my life under the law, and try myself and judge myself by the law, though I trust not to be “under the law before God?”

This use of the law remains under the Gospel; and those who most constantly use it for these purposes, are those who understand the gospel best. Whatever, then, your state is, there is use in the law. If you are yet unreconciled to God, the law condemns you. “Agree with thine adversary quickly.” Apply yourself unto Christ, who bore

your sins in his own body, that you may find rest unto your soul.

If you have already sought shelter under his cross, still keep your eye upon the law. Look to it, that you may better measure that which is beyond all measure, the goodness of him who has blotted out the record of your transgressions. Look to it also as the rule by which you are to be guided; the standard by which you are to judge yourself now, and hereafter to be judged: see how far, how very far, you come short of that standard, and be humble.

LECTURE VIII.

WHATEVER KNOWLEDGE WE HAVE OF GOD, IS DERIVED TO US THROUGH HIS SON JESUS CHRIST: WHO HAS DECLARED HIS JUSTICE AND MERCY.

JOHN i. 18.

18. *No man hath seen¹ God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.*

This sentence reminds us of a most important truth. We know nothing of God, nothing which

¹ *Seen*, perceived, discovered, and fully understood, either as to his essence or his attributes. *Declared*, revealed, disclosed.

we can depend upon or trust to, except what he has himself revealed. *No man hath seen God at any time.* As it is justly said in the book of Job, “Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?”²

Yet we often meet with those who argue respecting God and his counsels, as if they *had* seen him, and been admitted to the “secret things which belong to him.” And still more often we find men so acting, so living in the world, as if they knew that he cared not for good or evil, and would make no difference between those who serve him and those who serve him not.

Now it would be a grievous calamity if there were no help for this ignorance: if, because no man hath seen God, therefore no man, however desirous and piously sincere, could become acquainted with his character and will. His we are, and from his hand nothing can deliver us. We must be sensible of the power which he has over us, whether for good or evil, happiness or misery, if we attend to the constitution either of the body or the soul. Can it, then, be a matter of indifference, a light matter, whether we are the objects of his anger, or his favour? whether he is reconciled to us, and we are at peace with him?

Here, then, is the blessing which we receive from that vast event which St. John has been an-

² Job xi. 7.

nouncing, "God manifest in the flesh:" God revealing himself to us, "by his Son, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." *No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.* Or, as the same truth is expressed in St. Luke, (x. 22,) "No man knoweth who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." / .

The Jewish Scriptures certainly furnish much knowledge of God; all the knowledge which could be given by description. He is represented as "God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible." He is represented as "the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him to a thousand generations."³ "All his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he."⁴ The Psalms of David abound with great and lofty thoughts concerning the majesty and goodness of God. And the prophets fill up the outline, and describe "the High and Holy One, who inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, yet humbleth himself to behold the things that are upon the earth," and to "look on him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at his word."⁵

³ Deut. vii. 9.⁴ Deut. xxxii. 4.⁵ Isaiah lxvi. 2.

St. John, however, was no stranger to this. He was brought up in the knowledge of it, as belonging to the Jewish nation ; a nation distinguished from the rest of the world, because they had this knowledge ; because they did not “change the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man,” or suppose that the world was either self-created or had no beginning.

And yet St. John clearly implies in this sentence that the incarnation of *the only begotten Son of God, who is in the bosom of the Father, has declared* God to us, as he could not otherwise be declared ; has given us an acquaintance with him which we could not otherwise have enjoyed.

And it is easy to perceive this. Let us trace it in regard to the two attributes with which we are most concerned, his JUSTICE and his MERCY.

1. We are told, plainly told in Scripture, that God “cannot look upon evil ;” that “he will by no means clear the guilty.” “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.” But men invent a thousand reasons, why they should not believe this. *Therefore the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared it.* He declared it, when he was lifted up on the cross to “bear the sins of many :” to “bear our sins in his own body :” to “give his life a ransom :” to “die unto sin :” to show that between sin, and misery, as the consequence of sin, there is an inseparable

connexion—and that “if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die ;” for “the wages of sin is death.”

A king, (let us suppose,) an earthly sovereign, has proclaimed to his subjects, that every wilful offender against his law shall die. What irresistible force would be added to his proclamation, if rather than leave the law unsatisfied, he did not spare his son, his only son ! Here, then, the incarnation of the *only begotten Son of God* has declared to us the JUSTICE of the Father with a plainness not to be misunderstood.

✱ 2. But God is also revealed to us as “long suffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.” And surely the gospel of Christ Jesus has declared this in characters which shine as a sunbeam. There his MERCY is beheld in active exercise : “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” As the apostle writes, “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” *The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, has declared* the Father to us, as planning the wonderful scheme of our redemption ; as testifying his goodness by that “mystery of godliness,” which “the angels desire to look into :” as sending out his ambassadors to a rebellious world, that the world may be converted to God : “as having prepared for them that love him” glory which cannot

be expressed, and “such good things as pass man’s understanding.”

Behold, then, the character in which God is revealed to you: He, whom *no man hath seen at any time*, “though he is not far from any of us:” He with whom you have to do. However boldly men may contend and cavil, you cannot know him except as he has revealed himself. Behold, as St. Paul says, looking to this very thing—“behold the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but towards thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.”⁶

“Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish.” Behold, ye that are penitent and poor in spirit, and rejoice: “yea, again I say unto you, rejoice.”

LECTURE IX.

JOHN'S ACCOUNT OF HIMSELF. HIS BAPTISM.

JOHN i. 19—28.

19. *And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent Priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?*

⁶ Rom. xi. 22.

20. *And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.*

21. *And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.*

22. *Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?*

23. *He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.*

John had taken upon himself a character of great importance. He had stood forward, and called upon all to consider their ways, “before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.” “Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” He might expect to be inquired of, *Who art thou; what sayest thou of thyself?* Art thou “he that should come to redeem Israel?” Or, art thou Elias, who, according to the scribes, “must first come?”¹ *Art thou that prophet?*² *And he answered, No.* He was not the Christ. He would not take upon himself the name of Elijah, that great and honoured name, though he was acting “in the spirit and power of Elijah, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”³ Nor was he a prophet, commissioned of God to declare things future. But he was one in whom

¹ Matt. xvii. 10.

² Or a prophet, ὁ προφήτης εἰς σὺ.

³ Luke i. 17.

prophecy was accomplished: He was “the voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a high way for our God.” ⁴

24. *And they which were sent were of the Pharisees.*

25. *And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?*

26. *John answered them, saying, I baptize with water; but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not;*

27. *He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.*

28. *These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.*

The Evangelist here speaks of BAPTISM, as of a practice familiarly known. And so the question of the Pharisees, is not, *why baptizest thou* at all? but *why baptizest thou, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?* Yet if the word were not in constant use among ourselves, we should see that it needed explanation. *John was baptizing*, i. e. immersing in water, those who came to him for this purpose, “confessing their sins.” To what end?

The oldest Jewish writers acquaint us that baptism had been practised as an ordinary rite, when

⁴ Isaiah xl. 3.

a heathen became a proselyte to the truth revealed in the Hebrew Scriptures, and turned from his national “vanities to serve the living and true God.” “In all ages,” they say, “when a Gentile is willing to enter into the covenant, and gather himself under the wings of the majesty of God, and take upon him the yoke of the law, he must be circumcised, and *baptized*, and bring a sacrifice.”⁵ Certain rules were observed, both of time and place. It was done—not on the sabbath, not by night—at a confluence of waters, with two or three reputable persons as witnesses.

The meaning must have been this:—The convert had been polluted by idolatry, and all its attendant wickedness. From this he must be purified. And his immersion in the water into which he was plunged, was an emblem of the purification which he required and received. It did not purify, but it prefigured and betokened purification. As was said afterwards of christian baptism, “Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord;” so would the Jewish teacher say, Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thine idolatry:—as the water cleanses the defilement of the body, so let the corruption which has defiled the soul be purged and cleansed.

Still it might be asked, *Why baptizest thou,*

⁵ Maimonides. Quoted by Wall.

when those whom John was baptizing were not heathens, but belonged to the chosen nation, and acknowledged the God of their fathers. He acquaints us, that he *baptized with water* “unto repentance.” “The multitude who came forth to be baptized of him,” confessed that they as much required to be cleansed from the corruption of wilful sin, as the heathens from their ignorant superstitions. Each were to become new creatures, being “purged from their old sins.”⁶

The meaning of the ordinance remained unchanged, when our Lord saw fit to sanction it as the entrance into his religion, the token of his faith: and taught his apostles to “go into all the world, baptizing in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” The convert to the Hebrew faith washed away his idolatry: the convert to the Christian faith washes away his corrupt nature, in whatever way it may have polluted him: the prayer for him is, that the water in which he is baptized, may be “sanctified to the mystical washing away of sin,” and be attended by “spiritual regeneration.”⁷

The ordinance, it is true, is not now commonly performed by the *immersion*, but by the *sprinkling* of the body. But this does not affect its nature. In whatever way it is performed, it is figurative. The putting away of the defilement of the flesh is

⁶ See 2 Pet. i. 9.

⁷ See Baptismal Service.

nothing, except as it indicates the heart renewed, and “believing unto righteousness.” All the waters of Jordan can be no more effectual than the smallest drop, to confer grace which God does not bestow, or wash away sin which God does not forgive. And therefore we bring our children to the font, in humble hope and earnest prayer, that as the body is sprinkled with water, so the heart may be “sprinkled from an evil conscience,” “sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ,”⁸ and renewed by the Spirit unto righteousness and true holiness: and thus the words of the prophet may be accomplished, “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean.”⁹

In regard to ourselves, we have all been baptized with water unto “repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.” We do not rest in dependence upon the formal ceremony, though we highly and justly value it, as that which was appointed of our Lord himself, and dignified by his own example. But as the body without the soul is dead, so the form without the spirit is dead also. The outward purification must be answered by inward purity: and baptism must “save us, not,” as it is “the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but,” as it is “the answer of a good conscience towards God.”¹

⁸ See Heb. x. 22. 1 Pet. i. 2.

⁹ Ezek. xxxvi. 25.

¹ 1 Pet. iii. 21.

LECTURE X.

JOHN DESCRIBES JESUS AS THE LAMB OF GOD.

JOHN i. 29—34.

29. *The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*

30. *This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me.*

31. *And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.*

32. *And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.*

33. *And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.*

34. *And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.*

Jesus had been living in retirement while the Baptist was fulfilling his public ministry. Therefore John *knew him not*: yet he knew the purpose

for which he came. The Spirit had revealed this to him ; and therefore he is able to bear record to him as *the Son of God* : as him whose ministry was to set aside his own, as him who was to complete, by the gift of the Holy Ghost, that baptism of repentance which he had himself been hitherto exercising. He points him out to his disciples in terms which at once explain a whole volume of type and prophecy. *Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*

We had been told before, “ The Word was made flesh.” The reason, the purpose of this incarnation is now disclosed. It is all contained in the description, *The Lamb of God*. He came to be the propitiation for sin. He came to be that, which He alone could be, an atonement to the holiness of God for the guilt incurred by man.

Adam had transgressed the law which he was bound to obey, and involved the whole race of his posterity in corruption. And how could man be pardoned, and the holiness of God’s government be maintained ? “ As by one’s man’s disobedience many were made sinners,” who could be the one, by whose “ obedience many might be made righteous ? ” None of the sons of men could offer an atonement. They needed atonement ; for they were themselves corrupt : they had nothing to pay : “ No man can redeem his brother, or make agreement unto God for him.” But the Son of God, the eternal, uncreated Word, consented to stand

in the stead of a guilty race. “In the volume of the book it is written of him, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.”¹ Being “without spot of sin,” his innocence might be received as a free offering : and, taking man’s nature upon him, he could suffer man’s penalty.

This was determined from the beginning. Jesus is called, “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”² And being so determined, it was foreshown in various ways. From the earliest times, the patriarchs are represented as offering sacrifice to God. As mankind were dispersed, they carried the custom with them, though its purpose was lost and forgotten. But the whole is contained in the law given by Moses to the Israelites. It could not be mistaken, when the priest laid his hands upon the head of the creature intended for an offering, and made confession of sin over the head of the sacrifice ;³ thus prefiguring what was afterwards to be more fully explained, how the Lord had laid on one the iniquity of all.⁴

By the ordinances of the law, various animals were used in sacrifice. But none so constantly as the lamb. One was offered up in the temple every morning, and another every evening : and on the sabbath, two.⁵ But it was the rite of the passover which most evidently and remarkably typified that full and perfect sacrifice and satisfaction for the

¹ Ps. xl. 6. Heb. x. 4, &c.

² Rev. xiii. 8.

³ Lev. xvi. 21.

⁴ Isa. liii.

⁵ Numb. xxviii. 3—10.

sins of all men, which was consummated upon the cross. The lamb slain as the passover, was to be without blemish.⁶ So was Jesus without spot of sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.⁷ The lamb was to be “of the first year;” so Christ was cut off in the prime of his days: and slain by such a death, that as was ordered in the killing of the passover, “not a bone of him was broken.” The lamb was to be slain by the “whole assembly of the congregation of Israel.” So it was on the principal festival of the year that “counsel was taken against Jesus, to put him to death:” and the whole people made it their own act, by exclaiming, “Crucify him! crucify him!” “his blood be on us, and on our children!” The lamb, too, was slain in the evening. And so it was in the evening, “about the ninth hour,” when Jesus, “knowing that all things were now accomplished” which he had undertaken for our salvation, declared,—“It is finished;”—“and bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.” And as in the manner of the sacrifice all was similar, so was the effect the same. The blood of the lamb sprinkled on the door-posts of the houses, preserved the people of Israel from the messenger of destruction. And so the blood of Christ, sprinkled as it were upon our hearts, is designed to exempt the sinner from the stroke of divine justice, and save him from “the bitter pains of eternal death.” Thus was atone-

⁶ Exod. xii. 3, &c.⁷ See 1 Pet. i. 19.

ment made to the justice of God : who in mercy to man's ruined and helpless state has covenanted to receive the blood of one instead of the blood of many, and to be reconciled to the penitent offender for the sake of his dear Son.

Here then is the sense in which we behold Jesus as *the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world* :—taketh away all that sin which is laid upon him by the faith of the penitent offender. The words of the Baptist show that he possessed the key of that mysterious worship which God had established, that he was empowered to disclose its meaning, hitherto concealed. He points to Jesus and exclaims, *Behold the Lamb of God*. Behold in him, the person so long prefigured by the sacrifices of the law. Behold the one righteous, designed in the counsels of God as a substitute for many sinners. Behold the true Paschal Lamb, who is offered for us, to take away the sin of the world : who by his death shall destroy death, and by his rising to life again shall restore us to everlasting life. “ For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”

The application of these words of the Baptist is simple and clear. *Behold the Lamb of God*. Let wilful offenders against the divine command behold the testimony which God has borne to the heinousness of sin, in the fact established by the

law of Moses, that “without shedding of blood is no remission.”

But let the humble and contrite behold, in *the Lamb of God*, an evident proof of the divine mercy. “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things”⁸ “pertaining to life and godliness?” “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.”⁹

LECTURE XI.

ANDREW, AND SIMON, AND OTHERS, CALLED AS APOSTLES OF JESUS. ESPECIAL MENTION OF NATHANAEL.

JOHN i. 35—51.

35. *Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples ;*

36. *And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith Behold the Lamb of God !*

37. *And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.*

38. *Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and*

⁸ Rom. viii. 32.

⁹ Rom. v. 10.

saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou?

39. *He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour.*

Though the call of these disciples was peculiar, the circumstances attending it are full of instruction.

They heard the Baptist point to Jesus as he walked, and say, *Behold the Lamb of God*, “which taketh away the sin of the world.” Behold him “of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write;” him “who should come,” and whom “God hath now sent to bless you:” “a Saviour which is Christ the Lord.”

How many amongst us are constantly hearing Jesus represented as “the way, the truth, and the life,” yet pass by on the other side! But these *followed Jesus*. Followed him, but not unknown or unobserved. He sees and encourages the first approach towards him; the first breathings of their faith. *He turned, and saw them following:* and when they inquired, *Master, where dwellest thou? he saith unto them, Come and see.*

This was a further trial of sincerity. Many will appear interested for a while, and then stop short. But *these came, and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day.* And whoever with an honest and good heart will consent to *come and*

see, shall not remain unsatisfied. In the abode where Jesus dwells, he will see “righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” He will see that, which can no where else be found.

And then, having learnt the truth, and discovered the greatness of the blessing, he will not keep the secret within his own breast, but will hasten to communicate it to his friends.

40. *One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.*¹

41. *He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias,*² *which is, being interpreted, the Christ.*

42. *And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone.*³

Here Jesus intimates what he afterwards confirmed; that Simon should be endured with such a firm and consistent temper, as should “be set like a flint,”⁴ inflexible and unbroken: he should be a corner-stone of the temple which was about to be soon raised to the honour of God and the salvation of man.

¹ The other is commonly supposed to have been St. John himself.

² *The Messias* in Hebrew, signifying the same as *the Christ* in Greek, the anointed.

³ Or rock, on whose preaching the foundation of my church shall be raised. See Matt. xvi. 18.

⁴ Isa. l. 7.

All Christians have not the prominent station which Peter held. But he himself speaks of all Christians, as being living stones in that spiritual temple, the church of God.⁵ And none can maintain their integrity, who are not resolute and firm; as a *stone*, solid and stedfast: a character which they receive, as Simon received his new name, from the Lord who has called them.

43. *The day following, Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me.*

44. *Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.*

45. *Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.*

46. *And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.*

47. *Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!*

48. *Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee.*

The whole of this history is instructive. When Philip first acquainted Nathanael of his own belief, that the Christ was to be found in the person of *Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph*, Nathanael

⁵ 1 Pet. ii. 5.

nael betrays a lurking prejudice. *Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?* Can so obscure a place, so ill reputed of, send forth the Holy One of God, the King of Israel? and do not the prophets speak of Bethlehem as the birth-place of the Messiah?⁶

This prejudice might not have been altogether blameable. He was not to take on trust so great a matter. Let him “prove all things, and hold fast that which is good.” He did not speak in the spirit of the Pharisees afterwards, when they said in scorn, and without inquiry, “Search and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.” When Philip invited him to *come and see*, he did not make excuse; he did not plead his family, or his business and worldly cares: he arose and went with Philip. And then we perceive how Philip had been directed by a superior guidance, that he should *find Nathanael*. He was suited to the purpose in which henceforth he was to be employed; for he was “a Jew, not outwardly, but inwardly;” whose “circumcision was of the heart:” *an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile*. He was not one of those who “loved to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they might be seen of men.” He sought the retreat of his garden, and the shade of his fig-tree, and there he poured out his soul before God. This, surely, (though it is only conjecture,) is the allusion of

⁶ See Matt. ii. 4—6.

Jesus, who said, *when thou wert under the fig-tree I saw thee.* “The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good ;” and the prayer which is offered in secret, shall be “rewarded openly.”

Such a proof of divine knowledge was irresistible to the mind of Nathanael.

49. *Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God ; thou art the King of Israel.*

50. *Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou ? thou shalt see greater things than these.*

51. *And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.*

There were many seasons, even whilst the Son of man was on earth, when this sight might have been witnessed, and “angels came and ministered unto him.” We cannot tell with certainty whether these are alluded to or no. Hereafter, doubtless, the whole world shall see it together, when “the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, and shall sit on the throne of his glory.”

But another truth is contained here, of great practical importance. Nathanael had not resisted the first call to inquiry, nor the first impulse of conviction. He had yielded his mind to the evi-

dence which was presented to him. “To him that hath shall be given.” Jesus says, *Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these.* So it is universally. “Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.”⁴ “Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord.”⁵ He that now goes on his way softly, but sincerely, and opens his heart to the emotions of the Holy Spirit, shall be brought to *see greater things*, than, in the beginning of his course and the infancy of his faith, he had ventured to desire.

LECTURE XII.

JOHN ii. 1—11.

THE FIRST MIRACLE IS PERFORMED IN CANA AT A MARRIAGE.

1. *And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there:*
2. *And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage.*
3. *And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine.*

⁴ Jerem. xxix. 13.

⁵ Hos. vi. 3.

4. *Jesus saith unto her, Woman,¹ what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.*

5. *His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.*

In this domestic history is represented to us the way in which the Eternal Word, whose majesty has been so fully described, “dwelt amongst us” in form and fashion as a man. The first narrative which we read, relates to his conduct at a common family entertainment, to which, according to custom, all the friends and neighbours of the bridegroom were invited.

It is not clear with what purpose the mother said to Jesus, *They have no wine*. But from his answer it would seem to be said with an expectation that he would exercise his power. And her order to the servants implies the same: *Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it*.

Those who wait long, and seek the Lord, know not when the hour may come that he shall see fit to hear them, and interpose. But they may be sure that he does not neglect or overlook them,

¹ Though to our ears this appellation sounds harshly, there is no such effect according to the usage of the original language. The word *γυναι* might as properly have been translated, *Mother*. The whole answer, however, may be sufficient to show that *the Mother of Jesus*, as such, is entitled to none of the veneration which belongs to the Son alone. Whether so intended or not, it leaves them without excuse, who taking the honour from the Son, have exalted Mary as “the queen of heaven,” “the hope,” “the life,” “the health of the world.”

and is only delaying till the proper hour comes. In the mean while their course is clearly prescribed to them. *Whatsoever he saith unto thee, do it.*

6. *And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece.*²

7. *Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim.*

8. *And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it.*

9. *When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was : (but the servants which drew the water knew :) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom,*

10. *And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine ; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse : but thou hast kept the good wine until now.*

11. *This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory : and his disciples believed on him.*

The intention of the miracles performed by Jesus is shown in these words: *He manifested forth his glory : and his disciples believed on him.* The miracles were needful to prove the authority in which he came. The people asked, as they had a right to ask, “What sign showest thou, that thou doest these things?” What sign dost thou give us, that thou hast a claim to our faith and

² According to their constant habit of washing before meals.

obedience? And the natural answer was that which he himself alleged: "If I had not done among them the things which none other man did, they had not had sin;" they would not be condemned for disbelieving me.

It is only by some change in the usual course of nature, either by the communication of super-human knowledge, or by an interruption of the settled order of the universe, that a revelation can be proved to be of heaven, and not of men. For this purpose alone God has seen fit to interpose, and occasionally to permit a change in that arrangement of things which he established at the creation. He did so in the case of Moses. Moses very naturally expected that neither the Israelites nor the Egyptians would attend to his summons. (Ex. iv. 1.) "He answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee." And the Lord gave him power by which the truth of his promise might be seen, when he assured him, "Certainly I will be with thee." It was the same with Joshua, till the will of God was accomplished by the settlement of the Israelites in Canaan: it was the same with Elijah when he recalled the people from their idolatry. And now the divinity of Jesus was manifested in the like manner. What we call *the laws of nature*, i. e. the principles on which God framed the world, were suspended at his command:

water became wine : the sea was calmed : the provision of bread was augmented : the fig-tree withered away : fever, even death, was arrested in its course.

✱ Thus the Creator did again, what he had before done at the creation. He visibly exercised that power to change the regular system of things, which he is constantly exercising to keep the system regular. It is not more surprising that a certain union of substances should produce wine, than that they should produce water : that the juice by which a tree is nourished should suddenly fail, than that sap should ever flow within its pores. It is not more surprising that the substance of a few loaves and fishes should be enlarged, till many thousands were satisfied with food, than that any substance should ever be produced where none existed before. It is not more surprising that the eye should be enabled to see, or the ear to hear, than that any ear should be formed for hearing, or any eye for seeing. It is not more astonishing that the blood should be restored to its natural circulation, or that the lungs should breathe again, than that blood should be “the life of man” at all, or that “the breath of life” should ever have been imparted.

If, then, it at first seems strange to you, that Jesus should perform these wonders and mighty deeds, look back to the beginning, when God

created the heaven and the earth. What could be more strange than that God should say, "Let there be light,—and there was light." "Let us make man in our image.—And man became a living soul." And we were before told, that "nothing was made, that was made, without" him who was now exercising his power: exercising his power to change or suspend what he had at first ordained and established. The object was no light one; it was one which could not otherwise be fulfilled: it was to show that he who had now been born into the world, was indeed "a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." And St. John here, unintentionally as it were, alludes to the effect produced upon his own mind, and the minds of his brethren. *This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee; and his disciples believed on him.*

We, who could not witness the miracles, believe on him "through their word." And if we continue stedfast in the faith, the promise made by Jesus to Nathanael may be again applied. We "shall see greater things than these." Indeed, greater things are daily seen, when the promise of the Scripture is fulfilled, and a new heart and a right spirit is given to any man. It is much to govern the material elements, and it can be done by him alone who moulded them in their original form: but it is more to govern the human will,

and give a new direction to the affections—to raise them above things seen, and fix them upon things eternal.

May we all be conscious of this superior power exercised over ourselves !

LECTURE XIII.

JESUS CLEARS THE TEMPLE OF THOSE WHO PROFANED IT, GIVING AN EXAMPLE OF RELIGIOUS ZEAL.

JOHN ii. 12—25.

12. *After this he went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples: and they continued there not many days.*

13. *And the Jews' Passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem,¹*

14. *And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting :*

15. *And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables;*

¹ The first passover, A. D. 30, the first year of the ministry of Jesus.—*Newcome.*

16. *And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence ; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise.*

17. *And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.*²

This recollection of St. John is interesting. He seems to allude to some surprise felt at the time by the apostles. And certainly there was much to astonish them. Jesus saw, with great indignation, an evil practice which the proper guardians of the temple had overlooked, or countenanced. When he saw it, the fire kindled within him; he laid aside his usual character, and eagerly engaged himself in dispersing those who profaned his Father's house. This surprised them. But their surprise was checked when they remembered the words of Scripture, *The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up*. I am even consumed by my zealous feelings for the honour of thy house.

“It is good to be zealously affected in a good thing:” and the wonder is, that we should be so earnest in trifles, and so lukewarm in what is most important. But the same inward feelings will always lead to similar conduct. They had led David to say, “I will not come into the tabernacle of my

² Ps. lxi. 9. The whole passage stands thus: “For thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face. I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children. For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.”

house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids, until I find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.”³ And now a like emotion is hallowed by the Son of God. It is *my Father’s house* which is thus desecrated!

Ought we not to feel the same, when we hear the name of God profaned; when we see his commands neglected; when multitudes have no knowledge of him? We too should be zealous for the honour of our heavenly Father. And this zeal must not evaporate in mere vague or idle lamentation; but after the example of Jesus, we must endeavour to promote what we desire, and remove the evils over which we mourn.

18. *Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?*

19. *Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.*

20. *Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building,⁴ and wilt thou rear it up in three days?*

21. *But he spake of the temple of his body.*

22. *When therefore he was risen from the dead, his*

³ Ps. cxxxii. 3—5.

⁴ This speaks of the restoration, the gradual rebuilding, of the second, or Zerubbabel’s temple, begun by Herod, sixteen years before the birth of Christ. Forty-six years had now elapsed, and the repair was not yet completed.

disciples remembered that he had said this unto them ; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.

The temple which they profaned, whilst they professed to hold it in veneration, was the temple of which they thought and spoke. He spoke of a greater temple, *the temple of his body*. And he had reason to term it so. For a temple is raised to the honour of God, a testimony to his name, in the midst of a world which he has made, but which is too often forgetful of its Maker. And such also was the body which had been now prepared for Jesus, when “the Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us.” It was given him that he might glorify God in the bodily form and nature of man, first by living to his service, and then by dying as a sacrifice to his holiness.

We must bear in mind, however, that this term, great and honourable as it is, is not applied to the body of Jesus alone. St. Paul addresses every Christian when he says, “Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?” “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?”⁵ The temple is dedicated to the service of God. And so are those whom Christ has called to be a “peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

⁵ 1 Cor. vi. 19 ; iii. 16.

When the Lord of the temple came, seeking what he had a right to expect there, piety and devotion, he found it made *a house of merchandise*; nay, even “a den of thieves.” Let it not then be so with us, when the Lord shall finally come to examine the spiritual temple, which it is the purpose of his grace to purify—when he takes account of “the things done in the body, whether they be good or bad.” “The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?”⁶ At his second coming, let him not find that unseemly or unworthy things have got possession there, where every thing ought to be inscribed with “holiness to the Lord.” “For the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.” “Therefore, glorify God in your body and your spirit, which are his.”

23. *Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did.*

24. *But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men,*

25. *And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.*

He knew the weakness, the fickleness of this people, *and did not commit himself unto them.*

⁶ Mal. iii. 1, 2.

They believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did: but he perceived in them no stability; nothing that promised zealous and consistent faith. The soil was so light or so stony, that even if the blade shot up for a while, it would soon wither away and perish, when the first heat of temptation came.

Jesus still *knows what is in man*. This should be an awful thought to the hollow and insincere professor. It is the greatest comfort of the humble and earnest Christian, who is struggling against his infirmities, and lamenting his unworthiness; but on whose heart is written, as it was on that of Paul, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”⁷

LECTURE XIV.

NICODEMUS IS ASSURED OF THE NECESSITY OF REGENERATION.

JOHN iii. 1—5.

1. *There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:*

⁷ Gal. vi. 14.

2. *The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.*

3. *Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

We may feel assured that these words, though they convey a general truth applicable to all mankind, were especially suited to the frame of mind in which Nicodemus came to Jesus. As we were lately told, “He needed not that any should testify of man; for he knew what was in man:” and therefore he addressed his language to the case of the individual inquirer. What then may we suppose to have been the character of Nicodemus? He was *a man of the Pharisees, a ruler of the Jews*: accustomed, therefore, to think highly of himself in comparison of others; accustomed to believe himself safe in God’s favour; confident, perhaps, that he was, “according to the righteousness which is of the law, blameless.” And how surprised would a person of such disposition be, when he heard from the lips of one whom he knew to be *a teacher sent from God, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* A change must take place in him, which can only be compared to his being born anew, before he can be a member of that kingdom of God which is now come nigh unto you.

We may suppose, perhaps, that there was some idiom in language, some customary form of speech, which made this sentence appear less strong and forcible to Nicodemus, than it appears to us now. Men are apt to explain away in this manner that which they do not like to understand. It was not so, however. We perceive by what follows, that he took it in its broadest and most literal meaning.

4. *Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?*

5. *Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

Here then is the explanation: Jesus had said, *Ye must be born again.* He repeats it, and declares that *a man cannot enter into the kingdom of God, except he be born of water and of the Spirit*: except he be renewed by the Spirit cleansing and purifying him: unless an effect is produced upon the heart like that which water produces upon the body, and it is cleansed from its natural pollution.

They are remarkable expressions:—to be *born again, born of water and of the Spirit*:—but they exactly describe the thing intended. A man is first born “of blood, of the will of the flesh, of the will of man.” But he is born corrupt; the offspring of a corrupt parent. As we are told presently,

“That which is born of the flesh, is flesh.” He must be *born again of water and of the Spirit*:—of water, inasmuch as he was born impure, and must now be cleansed:—of the Spirit, inasmuch as he must be “renewed in the spirit of his mind.” The water cleanses, “the Spirit giveth life.” The water represents that purification which he needs, and which is bestowed through the blood of Christ. The Spirit enables him to walk as one who is “purged from his old sins,” his corrupt nature, and is mortifying the flesh with its affections and lusts, and living not to this world, but unto God.

For this reason, our Lord appointed as the entrance into his religion, a rite which should be an emblem of this change. He sent his disciples into all the world, BAPTIZING.

Baptism was no new ordinance, otherwise we should have more account of its introduction. It was explained in a former lecture, that baptism had been practised among the Jews, when one who had lived a heathen came to acknowledge the living and true God, and gave up the idols which he had been used to serve. Before he was admitted to their religion, he was baptized—immersed in water. He had been polluted by idolatry, and all its attendant wickedness; from this he must be purified. And his immersion in water was an emblem of the purification which he required and received. It did not purify—but it prefigured and betokened purification. It was an emblematical

action, signifying, that as the water cleanses the defilement of the body, so must the corruption which has defiled the soul be purged and cleansed. And such is the declaration to Nicodemus, *Except a man be born again, born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* Except a man be so truly renewed, that you may term him a new creature: except he be as thoroughly purified by the effusion of the Spirit on his soul, as his body would be purified by immersion in a stream of water; he cannot enter into the kingdom of God, that kingdom which Nicodemus was inquiring of. He may esteem himself—perhaps Nicodemus did—clean in the sight of God: but he needs a cleansing which he can only receive from the Spirit, through faith in the Son of God, before he can belong to God's heavenly kingdom. ✕

This may be best illustrated, by considering the case of some who were thus *born again*.

The Jewish assembly, addressed by St. Peter (Acts ii. 14, &c.) became convinced of the wickedness in which they had been led to concur; and “being pricked in their hearts, said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

The idea of *baptism* was not strange or new to this assembly. They had known that proselytes

from the heathen were baptized, when they turned from idols, and entered into the service of the living and true God, revealed to the Jewish nation. The heathen washed away the corruption of their idolatrous traditions. And these must wash away the corruption of prejudice and unbelief and hardness of heart, which had led them to “crucify the Prince of life.” They must make this acknowledgment, that they required to be cleansed by the water of regeneration; and were to rise out of it as “new creatures,” from whom “old things had passed away.”

“Then they that gladly received his word, were baptized.” Was it too much to say, they were *born again*? They had crucified Jesus: now they worshipped him. They had prided themselves in God’s favour: now they humbled themselves, and entreated remission of their sins. They were enabled, for the sake of that future life now set before them, to fix their affections, not on the things that are seen, but on the inheritance which is above. They were indeed new creatures: before they had lived for earth, now for heaven. “All that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.”

Another example occurs in the case of the Ethiopian who was returning from his worship at Jerusalem. (Acts viii.) He had learnt through the Jewish scriptures to serve God. But as yet

he knew nothing of the Redeemer. A particular commission was given to Philip, as a Christian teacher, to explain to him the doctrine of the Gospel. "As they went on their way, they came unto a certain water; and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" Why may I not receive the benefit which Jesus, whom thou preachest unto me, came to bestow? Why may I not *enter into the kingdom of God, being born again of water and of the Spirit*; "putting off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and putting on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness!"¹ Philip said, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him." "And he went on his way rejoicing." Having thus given an evidence of his faith, having been admitted into the covenant of grace, having received the pledge of the Holy Spirit, he went on his way rejoicing.

* These are practical illustrations of our Lord's meaning; *Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*. The kingdom of God is a kingdom of holiness: and man is not holy but corrupt. The

¹ See Eph. iv. 22—24.

Saviour of the world has provided a way for his purification. Therefore the entrance into his religion is by a figurative action, which indicates that man both needs to be renewed and purified, and desires to be renewed and purified : desires that as water removes the defilement of the flesh, so the Spirit of God may remove the corruption of the heart.² If a man comes like the Ethiopian, or like the Jews, of his own accord, and from personal conviction, and says, “See, here is water ; what doth hinder me to be baptized ?” he makes this acknowledgment for himself. If an infant is brought to baptism, the same acknowledgment is made by those who bring him. The parents, or whoever take the parents’ place, come with this avowal. Their child is of a corrupt stock, sinful ; but they desire that he may be born again, washed in the fountain “opened for sin and for all uncleanness ;”—and that a new heart may be put within him, “in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.” And thus they enrol him as a member of God’s kingdom.

It were well if every child, which is presented in the temple for the outward ceremony of baptism, were brought with this intelligent conviction : with a sense of the necessity of this spiritual regenera-

² Hence the ancient custom of putting white robes upon baptized persons, as signifying the purification of the soul expected by virtue of their baptism : and expressed in a form found among the works of Lactantius, *Fulgentes animas vestis quoque candida signat.*

tion, and an earnest desire and prayer that it might be obtained ! The Lord approved of the zeal of those parents who “brought their young children to him, that he might touch them.” It was done in faith, that he was a prophet ; it was done in hope, that a prophet’s blessing might avail. It was done in earnestness and with full purpose of heart ; for when his disciples rebuked those that brought them, they still persevered, till Jesus “laid his hands upon them and blessed them.” And so there is reason to believe that he will hear and favour the prayers of all parents who come in like simplicity of heart and faith : who feel that they have bestowed upon their offspring an earthly, corrupt nature, which would lead, not to life, but to death :—“for that which is born of the flesh, is flesh :”—and who therefore present their children to him who can change and renew that nature, and make it like unto his own. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”

Would God, my brethren, that this truth were better understood, and this primitive, this scriptural, this reasonable baptism more generally practised ! Then we should not find so many who, though born of water, as far as concerns the baptismal rite, are evidently not made new creatures by the Spirit, who renews and sanctifies the soul.

And let all examine, how it is with themselves. Can it be said of them, that they have been *born*

again? It *must* be true of them, if they belong to the kingdom of God. For “if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.”³ He is entirely different from what he would be, if he were not in Christ Jesus. His trust is different: his views are different: his life is different. For he lives and thinks as one who knows, “that as many as are baptized into Jesus Christ, are baptized into his death.” And “therefore they are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so they also should walk in newness of life.”⁴

LECTURE XV.

THE NECESSITY AND MEANS OF REGENERATION DECLARED.

JOHN iii. 6—8.

6. *That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*

This sentence explains that which was last considered. Jesus had assured Nicodemus, that “except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he

³ 2 Cor. v. 17.

⁴ See Rom. vi. 3, 4.

cannot see the kingdom of God.” And now he proceeds to declare, why this is needed. He tells it in short but important words, *That which is born of the flesh is flesh.*

The flesh is a phrase used in Scripture to signify man's nature. And that nature, as derived from Adam, is a corrupt and evil nature. Adam did not receive it so, for he was created pure and innocent: but he made it so when he transgressed the commands of God, and lost the innocence which he possessed, and the grace with which he had been endowed. And men since born his children are born in his likeness; inherit the nature of their sinful parents: are “very far gone from original righteousness,” and from their earliest years are “inclined to evil” continually.¹

This is what our Lord declares: *That which is born of the flesh is flesh*: that which man brings with him into the world is tainted with the sinfulness which has adhered to the human heart ever since the transgression of Adam.

But this sinfulness, however it may prevail on earth, can have no place in heaven. “Corruption cannot inherit incorruption.” Unholy man cannot be admitted into the presence of a holy God. Therefore this corrupt nature must be cleansed and renewed. “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” And for this regeneration and renewal, provision is

¹ Art. ix.

made in the Gospel of Christ Jesus. *That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.* The Spirit fulfils the well-known prophecy, "A new heart will I give you, and a right spirit will I put within you." The Spirit purifies the sinful principle, and enables the man to renounce evil, and to cleave to that which is good: to subdue wicked propensities, and to follow "love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Thus *the flesh*, the corrupt nature which is contrary to God, shall be subdued, and another nature introduced, which shall not be earthly, but heavenly; not carnal, but spiritual; not contrary to God, averse from his will, and strange to the holiness which belongs to him, but delighting in the will of God, aspiring after holiness, and setting the affections on things above. So that it might be truly affirmed, "If a man be in Christ Jesus, he is born again: is a new creature."

Jesus is well aware that this would seem to Nicodemus "a hard saying," a mysterious doctrine. But he bids him look, not to the difficulty or strangeness of the work, but to the power by which it is to be performed.

7. *Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.*

8. *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*

This is a singular and instructive comparison. The Spirit is compared to the wind, because both the Spirit and the wind are manifest from what they do, but are not seen in themselves, nor under man's controul. *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth.* There is hardly any thing in nature, over which man has so little power. God holds the winds, as he “holds the waters, in the hollow of his hand.”¹ The wind and storm fulfil his word. But man can do nothing to direct, or regulate, or restrain it. *The wind bloweth where it listeth.*

And such, says our Lord, is the case with the Spirit. It is beyond our power, or reach, or controul. Those who are born of the Spirit, are “born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” We cannot command the Spirit, and say, Come, and he cometh. The parent cannot secure the Spirit for his child, nor the child for his parent. The minister cannot engage that the Spirit shall influence the hearts of his people. Neither can the people secure that the Spirit may rest upon their minister, that he may “open his mouth boldly,” or “rightly divide the word of truth.” They can pray with hope, nay, with confidence: but still there may be some reason, some hindrance known to God, and sufficient in his sight, why the gift should be withheld. They are constantly reminded, that the Spirit is not theirs to give.

¹ Job ix.

At the same time we must be far from supposing, because the Spirit bloweth where it listeth, that there are not sure and regular causes for its breathing on one and not on another. Though we cannot determine or divert the course of the wind, nothing in nature is under more regular command. The stars are not more exactly governed, though the stars rise at a known and certain time, and the changes of the wind are to us uncertain. There is as much reason why the wind blows from a particular quarter, and why it blows sometimes gently and sometimes forcibly, as there is reason why a stone falls to the ground, or a feather floats in the air. *So is every one that is born of the Spirit.* The Spirit's influence is settled and directed by divine wisdom, though that wisdom is often to us unsearchable, and "his ways past finding out."

But though we cannot controul the operation of the wind or of the Spirit, we can see the effects of both, and we know the presence of both by those effects. Of the wind it is said here, *Thou hearest the sound thereof.* It breathes in the gentle gales of spring, and all nature is refreshed and rejoiced; it roars in the boisterous storm, and the forest shakes, and the vast sea heaves under its force. So likewise is the effect of the Spirit on the heart. The effect is manifest, though the agent is not visible. It is seen in that "righteousness, and peace, and joy," which are among its most

precious results. Or it is seen in that boldness, and zeal, and energy, which rises against opposition; which takes the kingdom of heaven by violence; which rebukes the tyrant on his throne, and defies even the “king of terrors.”

These are proofs of the Spirit which will be differently manifested in different characters, according to their respective circumstances. But there is one proof which must be evident in every man who has a Christian hope in him: namely, that the flesh is subdued to the spirit. St. Paul has shown us, (Rom. viii. 1—14,) that it is the great business of the Christian life to “crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts:” as it is the sure mark of a Christian that “he walks not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” *That which is born of the flesh is flesh*; and “they that are after the flesh cannot please God; because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”²

² Rom. viii. 9—14.

LECTURE XVI.

DISCOURSE WITH NICODEMUS CONTINUED.
THE TYPE OF THE BRAZEN SERPENT.

JOHN iii. 9—15.

9. *Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?*

10. *Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?*

11. *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.*

12. *If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?*

13. *And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man, which is in heaven.*

Nicodemus ought to have understood the necessity of that regeneration of which he was so hard to be convinced. For it was nothing new, to a *master of Israel*, to one instructed out of the law and the prophets. David had prayed, that God would “create a new heart, and a right spirit within him.”¹ And God had promised the same, by the

¹ Ps. li. 10.

mouth of his prophets: saying in many places, “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.”²

But even if it had not been so, and these things had been more novel and more mysterious than they were, Jesus was to be believed. He had given proofs that he ought to be believed: and Nicodemus had come, acknowledging this; acknowledging that he had shown himself to be a teacher sent from God. Yet he disputes his teaching, and says, *How can these things be?*

This is very common. We avow our belief, and we do believe, that Jesus is the Son of God; and yet we *receive not his witness*: and live and act as if those things could not be, or would not be, of which he has declared, *We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen.*

And yet if we refuse this testimony, to whom shall we go? *No man hath ascended up to heaven*; no man can tell us of heavenly things, *but he that came down from heaven* for that express purpose, *even the Son of man which is in heaven*: whose abode is heaven, whose dwelling is with God from the beginning.

Let not such a witness have cause to say of any of us, *Ye receive not my testimony.* The words which immediately follow show, that to refuse it is death, to receive it everlasting life.

² Ez. xxxvi. 25.

14. *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up :*

15. *That whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have eternal life.*

Here another truth is set before Nicodemus, which might more justly appear new and strange to him.

We read in Numbers xxi. (6—9,) that the people, weary of their detention in the wilderness, murmured against God and his servant Moses. “And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole; and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole; and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass he lived.”

This transaction, we now learn, had a meaning which could not be then foreseen; a reference beyond itself. *As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up.* As the serpent was raised on high in the midst of the camp, that it might be beheld by all the people :

even so must the Son of man be raised upon the cross, that all may behold the Lamb of God, the sacrifice offered for the sin of the world.

And for a like cause. The cause why Moses lifted up the serpent, was the hopeless state to which their sins had reduced the Israelites. "The people came to Moses and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee: pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us." And the cause why Jesus was lifted up, was the sin of mankind. "Sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all had sinned."³ And then it was, by reason of this sad and hopeless condition, that the compassion of God was moved, and he gave his only begotten Son, "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish." This is the first resemblance. But a further resemblance is found in the nature of the remedy. Of the Israelites, as many as looked up towards the serpent of brass, were healed of their wounds. Of sinners, it is promised that whosoever look up to the Son of man, shall find the remedy of their sins. Their wound is healed, and is not a wound unto death. They are assured that "the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin." They are assured, that "sin shall not have dominion over them." "They are washed, they are sanctified, they are justified in the name of the

³ Rom. v. 12.

Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Thus is the consequence of sin removed, and it has no more power to destroy.

The difficulty is to feel that sense of danger which shall rouse us to seek deliverance. This must be done by ourselves. As there has been *a lifting up* on God's part, there must be *a looking up* on ours. And here it is not with us as with the Israelites. The Israelites could not but perceive the malignancy of their bodily malady. The disease of the soul is hidden and concealed from our notice. But if any thing can convince us of its fatal consequences, it must be the remedy which God has mercifully provided. *The Son of man must be lifted up, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish.* Unless then the Son of man be lifted up, there is no more help nor hope, than there was to the Israelites, till Moses lifted up the serpent of brass, that they who had been bitten might look upon it and live.

This brings the subject closely home. Have you felt the wound which sin has inflicted upon the soul, and felt it deeply enough to seek its remedy? Have you found that remedy in the sacrifice of Christ, now offered as a full and perfect satisfaction? Then is the Son of man to you, what the brazen serpent was to the Israelites. God has said to us, as to them, "Look unto him and be saved, all ye ends of the earth." And he has also said,

“ There is none other name under heaven given among men,” whereby ye may obtain health and salvation.⁴

LECTURE XVII.

DISCOURSE WITH NICODEMUS CONTINUED.

JOHN iii. 16—21.

16. *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

17. *For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world ; but that the world through him might be saved.*

18. *He that believeth on him is not condemned : but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

19. *And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*

Our Lord had been uttering to Nicodemus things which probably surprised and perplexed him. But

⁴ See Acts iv. 12.

he does not leave him without an assurance full of comfort.

He had sought Jesus, under an acknowledgement that he was “a teacher sent from God.” He is now acquainted that God had indeed sent him as a pledge of his love, as the author of peace and bearer of mercy. He had come to an idolatrous world—a world which had become idolatrous, because men had not liked to retain God in their knowledge. He came to a nation which had misused the privileges it enjoyed, had rejected the counsels of God, and despised his reproofs: and yet he *came not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved*. He brought an offer of reconciliation; and his first message was, Peace to this rebellious people:—“to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile.” “Herein was love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” *He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

If subjects are in a state of rebellion against their sovereign, and he sends an embassy, offering to receive them again to favour on their laying down their arms: those who refuse his offer, and reject his messenger, are *condemned already*. They are condemned by their act of rebellion; and “his

wrath abides upon them ;” their state of condemnation continues, because they have not accepted the terms of reconciliation. Such is the case of those, who, like the Jews, reject the counsel of God against themselves.

And what are the grounds of their refusal? Do they say, We do not know him that is come to be the messenger of the Sovereign—we do not see his credentials? This answer will not avail them, either in law or conscience, if they have refused to examine those credentials, if they have rejected him unheard: still less, if he bore the signs of dignity so manifestly upon him, that all who had eyes to see, might recognize the proofs of his commission.

But what, it might be asked, could induce them to refuse? Could they have any culpable motive, any reason worse than ignorance? Too surely might they have been kept back by pride and hardness of heart: submission requires humility. They might have been actuated by a rebellious unrestrained spirit: disinclined to the rules imposed upon the subjects of the sovereign. And this, we are here told, was the condemnation of the Jews: that when light was come into the world, *men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil*. Their deeds were evil, their heart was evil; and they would brook no control, submit to no change of life. On several

occasions they display this temper. They contended against Jesus, on this sole ground, that he convicted them of sinfulness. “Master, saying this, thou condemnest us also.” “Are we blind also?”

Here was a proud, unhumbled heart, which would not listen to a message of reconciliation. Reconciliation implied enmity. Mercy implied desert of punishment. Peace required submission.

“Take heed,” as St. Paul says, “lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief,” arising from a like cause. Evil habits present a strong obstacle against reason and conviction. “If I believe in the name of Jesus Christ, (so a man may argue with himself,) I must acknowledge his precepts as my rule of life. I must be poor in spirit. I must be pure in heart. I must be meek and forgiving, I must be temperate and self-denying. A different society must be lived in: new habits formed: old habits abandoned.” Thus a barrier is raised between a man and serious reflection, when conscience whispers that the result of reflection may make reformation indispensable.

So He has said, who knew the heart of man.

20. *For every one that doeth evil hateth the light neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be re-
proved.*

21. *But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.*

Sincerity and insincerity, are here exactly described. Insincerity *hateth the light*: sincerity *cometh to the light*: cometh in language like that of the Psalmist, "Teach me, O God, the way of thy statutes!" Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law!" "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me!"

We may illustrate this by the different conduct of two kings of Judah. In the time of Josiah, "the book of the law," which had been lost sight of during the ungodliness of some former reigns, was brought unexpectedly to light, (2 Kings xxii. 11; xxiii. 2.) "And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes. And the king went up into the house of the Lord, and all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him; and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the Lord. And the king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all their heart and all their soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people stood to the covenant."

Thus it is, that *he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God.*

A few years afterwards, God sent a message to the son of this Josiah, Jehoiakim by name. (Jerem. xxxvi. 21.) It was written on a roll of parchment, and “Jehudi read it in the ears of the king, and in the ears of all the princes which stood beside the king. Now the king sat in the winter-house in the ninth month : and there was a fire on the hearth burning before him. And it came to pass, that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the pen-knife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed.” He has left us this awful example, *how every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprovèd.*

Can we wonder that the Almighty hath declared, “To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word?”³ Or can we hesitate to pray, “From hardness of heart, and contempt of thy word and commandment, good Lord deliver us”

³ Is. lxvi. 2.

LECTURE XVIII.

JOHN THE BAPTIST'S TESTIMONY TO JESUS
AS THE CHRIST AND THE AUTHOR OF
LIFE ETERNAL.

JOHN iii. 22—36.

22. *After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea ; and there he tarried with them, and baptized.*

23. *And John also was baptizing in Ænon near to Salim, because there was much water there : and they came, and were baptized.*

24. *For John was not yet cast into prison.*

25. *Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying.*

26. *And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.*

27. *John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.*

28. *Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him.*

29. *He that hath the bride is the bridegroom : but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice : this my joy therefore is fulfilled.*

30. *He must increase, but I must decrease.*

If the spirit of John the Baptist had been of the world, worldly, he would have been distressed and grieved at the intelligence which his disciples brought him. *He to whom thou bearest witness, behold the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.* He would have partaken of the feeling which in them was natural and pardonable, when they were unwilling that his honour should be diminished: that his star should fade before the light of “the Sun of Righteousness.”

But he has the satisfaction of reminding them, that instead of claiming honour he had uniformly declined it. *Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him.* And to this he now adds the beautiful remark, *A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.* What a multitude of heartburnings, and envyings, and jealousies, are removed when that sentence has possession of the heart! “For what hast thou which thou hast not received!” Hast thou talents? “Every good and perfect gift cometh from above.” Hast thou station or fortune? “God setteth up one and putteth down another.” Hast thou success in thy just and righteous designs? One plants, and another waters; it is “God who giveth the increase.” And if it is God who elevates, who bestows: so it is God also who withholds, who depresses, who denies. “Even so, Father; for so it seemeth good in thy sight.” Could we keep this in view,

it would banish discontent : for discontent is a want of dependance upon God : a forgetfulness, that as a man can receive nothing, so neither can he be deprived of any thing, but *from heaven*.

John proceeds to bear record to him whose messenger he was, and whose voice he now rejoiced to hear.

31. *He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all.*

32. *And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony.*

33. *He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.*

34. *For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.*

35. *The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.*

36. *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life: but the wrath of God abideth on him.*

John speaks here, as inspired with an ample knowledge of the blessings conveyed by “the covenant of promise.” *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.* Who can sufficiently comprehend what is intended in that phrase? The presence of God : and in his “presence is fulness of joy :” the possession of a nature without sin and

without sorrow : the deliverance from fear or danger : the exemption from all decay or change for ever.

This is the consummation. But the sentence both here and elsewhere speaks of something in possession. He that believeth *hath* everlasting life. He has now the beginning, the earnest of it. He has it, in reconciliation, acceptance, adoption with God. He has it, in union with Christ. He has it, in the dwelling of the Holy Spirit within him. He has it, in a heart raised beyond this present world, and fixed on things above. He has it, in “righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” All these blessings are immediate ; a new life given now, connected with life everlasting : a life unknown to those who do not belong to the same covenant : a secret hidden life which is animating the man within, whilst outwardly he is partaking of the cares and duties of the world below.

Is this indeed a “treasure,” a “pearl of great price?” John here tells us to whom it belongs, and by what means it is obtained. *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life. For the Father loveth the Son and hath given all things into his hand.* They, then, enjoy the blessing, who believe that God hath sent his Son, that he may give eternal life to as many as receive him : to all who receive the offer which is made in plain and simple terms, “Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall

never die ; but I will raise him up at the last day.”
“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

They who hear this offer with a hearing ear, reflect within themselves how far it may suit their case, how far it may supply their need. They perceive its fitness. For they are conscious of the distance which separates them from God : that though they live and move and have their being in him, their hearts are naturally strangers to the holiness which he requires. They gladly accept the offer, and take the promise home, as simply as it is made. It is offered to the believer, and they believe. It is held out to as many as receive Christ Jesus, and they receive him. They become one with him, and he with them : they dwell in him, and he in them. In all their spiritual growth, he strengthens and cherishes them, as the tree its branches. In their fears and dangers, he is their refuge, as the ark was a refuge to Noah. In their difficulties and labours, he directs them, as the head directs the members of the body. And though their life is sometimes feeble and ready to fail, and they are subject to many alternations of health and weakness ; still it survives ; they have life, they have everlasting life, as long as their faith keeps them united to the Saviour *whom God hath sent, who speaketh the words of God.* *They have received his testimony,* though multitudes re-

fuse it: they have *set to their seal that God is true*, and that “faithful is he who hath promised.”

It is not so with those who despise the gift of God, and set at nought his offers. Their state is described here in words few and brief, but amply comprehensive. *He that believeth not the Son shall not see life: but the wrath of God abideth on him.* The ark has floated near them, but they have refused to enter it for safety; therefore the flood must come, and sweep them all away. They have been nigh to the “city of refuge,” and have refused to take shelter within its gates; therefore *the wrath of God abideth on them.*

LECTURE XIX.

JESUS DISCOURSES WITH A WOMAN OF SAMARIA.

JOHN iv. 1—14.

1. *When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John,*

2. *(Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,)*

3. *He left Judea, and departed again into Galilee.*¹

¹ See Matt. iv. 12; Mark i. iv. 14.

4. *And he must needs go through Samaria.*

5. *Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.²*

6. *Now Jacob's well³ was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour.*

7. *There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water; Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.*

8. *(For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.)*

9. *Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.*

10. *Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.*

It was indeed an extraordinary providence, a signal *gift of God*, that what many prophets and righteous men had desired to see and had not seen, should now be unexpectedly granted to this Samaritan woman. The restorer of a lost world was before her. The author of eternal life was conversing with her. Without seeking it, without

² As related Gen. xlviii. 22, in the account of Jacob's death. "Moreover I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow.

³ A well which bore the name of Jacob.

knowing it, she had met with that “hidden treasure,” that “pearl of great price,” which “when a man has found, he sells all he has” to obtain.

We too must remember *the gift of God*, in making us to differ from that vast multitude who are yet strangers to the blessings of redemption. And the Lord here shows how those will act, who are happy in knowing these things. *Thou wouldest have asked, and he would have given thee living water.* In a future discourse it is explained, what this *living water* is. “This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe in him shall receive.” The Spirit, which renews, and cleanses, and sanctifies the soul: which comforts and instructs it, and guides it into all truth: which enables it to discern heavenly things, and to live the life of faith in the Son of God; this is the blessing intended here; the blessing which Christ alone can give; the blessing which they who *know the gift of God*, will ask of him; and which all who do ask of him shall receive.

This was as yet an unknown language to the Samaritan.

11. *The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water?*

12. *Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?*

13. *Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again :*

14. *But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst ; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.*

See here described, in vivid terms, the effect of that Spirit which Jesus sheds abroad upon the heart. First by comparison of what it is not, and does not resemble. *Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again.* How truly does this characterise the things which are most valued in this world ! *Whosoever drinketh, shall thirst again.* The pleasures of the world, whenever they are made the chief object, how truly unsatisfying are they, wearying when present, yet leaving the mind restless till it returns to them, and is again wearied. Riches, honours ! these too, they who have tasted, *thirst again* : something is still wanting, and yet remains to be acquired, often even on the brink of the grave.

It is not thus with the living water, drawn from the well of salvation.

1. It never fails. It is a living spring, perpetually flowing ; not a “broken cistern,” which may be soon exhausted. The more grace is sought, the more is grace bestowed. If all the world would ask—for all have need to ask, and all must seek at the right source—but if all would ask

and seek, not one should be refused. The invitation has no limits. It is wide as the prophet's words, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters!"

2. Next, it always satisfies. *Whosoever drinketh of the water which I shall give him, shall never thirst.* No craving void ensues, no restless desire is left to harass and disturb. It brings with it, and sheds over the soul, a calm, a satisfying comfort which nothing else can give, and which only those who have enjoyed it can understand.

3. And thirdly, it has an object and an end to which nothing earthly can be compared. *It springeth up into everlasting life.* It proceeds in a course which is to lead to that inestimable and inconceivable blessing.

And in this view, how justly may the Spirit which Jesus communicates be described as a spring of *living water*! Consider such a spring. It has its source in the rain and dews which God has provided to water the earth and make it fruitful. And the living water which Christ affords, proceeds from God. He so loved the world, that he sent his only Son to be the way of salvation.

The spring, small commonly at its source, gains strength as it flows along. So the Spirit in the heart may at first be as a drop, to which other and fresh drops are continually added, till it becomes a clear and sparkling stream.

The spring, too, proceeding from its perennial

source, and flowing onward, purifies its channel as it runs. It carries down before it that which is impure and muddy and would impede its current, and what remains is clear and beautiful. Such likewise is the effect of the Spirit of Christ upon the soul. It meets at first with much that is of an uncongenial nature, much that would sully and corrupt it. But this it gradually clears away. The “lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, and whatsoever is not of the Father but of the world”—these it carries off, and suffers not to rest, and choke the stream. Nothing remains but the purer properties of the renewed heart, temperance, and patience, and godliness, and meekness, and charity. These are seen to shine beneath the flowing water, and reflect that “Sun of righteousness,” from which their beauty is derived.

As a last point of resemblance, I observe that the stream still runs. It does not stagnate. It seems to have an object, from which it will not be long diverted; it cannot be stopped or restrained. It seeks the wide river or the still wider ocean, in which it is to be received at last. Such too is the living water of the Spirit. It is *in the heart a well of water springing up into everlasting life*. For this it was given; and for this it flows, and will flow on until the end come. When it first began, this was the object at which it aimed; and this it keeps constantly in view till that object is reached. It turns aside whatever would impede

its course ; and it gathers strength as it continues to flow. Christ, its author, gives fresh supplies from his fulness ; gives “ grace for grace ;” till at last he receives the soul, renewed and purified, into a sea which knows no storms. There it shall glide on through all eternity, in undisturbed peace and in unsullied purity.

Just cause was there to say, *If thou knewest the gift of God—thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.*

WE all know the gift of God. “ Ask, and ye shall receive ; seek, and ye shall find.” This gracious promise is implied in what is said to the woman : *Thou wouldest have asked, and he would have given thee.* It is clearly implied, that “ who-soever is athirst, may come, and take of the water of life freely.”

LECTURE XX.

DISCOURSE WITH THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA CONTINUED. JESUS DISCLOSES HIMSELF TO HER AS THE CHRIST.

JOHN iv. 15—26.

The woman at the well of Sychar who gave occasion to the preceding lecture, still continues to

understand in its literal sense, and in no other, the allusion of Jesus to *living water*. Upon which he leaves the subject, and proceeds to announce himself to her, and through her to the inhabitants of Samaria, as the Messiah whom they were expecting.

15. *The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.*

16. *Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.*

17. *The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband :*

18. *For thou hast had five husbands ; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband : in that saidst thou truly.*

19. *The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.*

20. *Our fathers worshipped in this mountain ;¹ and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.*

21. *Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.*

22. *Ye worship ye know not what : we know what we worship : for salvation is of the Jews.*

The worship of the Samaritans had been cor-

¹ Mount Gerizim. The blessings were promised there. (Deut. xxvii. 12, &c.) Hence the Samaritans inferred, that there ought to be the temple.

rupted, from the time when they became intermixed with the people of various countries, who had been sent to settle in Samaria, after its conquest by the king of Assyria. The true God had been recognized, and the early Scriptures preserved among them. But the idolatry and superstitions introduced by foreign settlers had been so intermixed with the truth, that they could only be described as *worshipping they knew not what*. The Jews, with all their formality and hypocrisy, still *knew what they worshipped*. They knew Him who had established them “to be a people unto himself.” They had kept the revelation of his will, “the law and the prophets,” pure and entire.

This woman showed by her language that she had little understanding of the real nature of divine worship. Her mind turned to the place, not to the manner of worshipping: whether *this mountain* of Samaria, mount Gerizim, or mount Sion, was the acceptable dwelling-place of the Most High. Jesus foretells, in the first place, the destruction in which both the Jews and the Samaritans were soon about to be involved, which should spare neither the temple of Gerizim, nor even the more costly buildings of Jerusalem. And then he intimates the establishment of a purer faith, which should lead to a spirit of devotion agreeable to the nature of God.

23. *But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.*

24. *God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*

25. *The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things.*

26. *Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.*

What Jesus declares concerning the worship of God, is the thing to be first attended to here.

He teaches us—by implication—what the worship of God should not be. It should not be a mere form or ceremony. This our nature inclines to make it. This woman's error, is the error of all human nature: treating the worship of God as if it consisted in circumstantials, and not in realities. People who are very far from a real knowledge or abiding fear of God, are comparatively ready to comply with religious forms. These satisfy that inward sense, that conviction of reason which prevails, that God must not be altogether neglected.

The Jews, for example, with no love of God in their hearts, were not deficient in their sacrifices and offerings: but are constantly reminded by the prophets, that this was not the chief service which God demanded. Samuel reproves Saul (1 Sam. xv. 22). “Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken, than the fat of rams.”

The Psalmist is made to ask, (l. 13,) “Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most high: and call upon me in the day of trouble.”

So the Prophets: (Hos. vi. 6:) “For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.” (Mic. vi. 7.) “Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.”

From all these passages it appears that the Jews were not backward to offer outward worship, however burthensome: and that the reproof of God was, that when they offered sacrifice, they did not feel as penitents; when they worshipped before him, they were actuated by no sentiments of pious and grateful love.

A kindred error prevails at all times: for as I before hinted, it is not in Jewish nature, nor in Samaritan nature, but in the universal nature of the human heart. How hardly are men persuaded that the services of the church are not in themselves *religion*, but the *signs and means* of religion! How slow are they to understand, that prayer is not merely the performance of a duty, but the ex-

pression of the heart! that the partaking of the Lord's Supper is not faith, but an ordinance for the faithful to observe! That the consecrated place, the posture, the ceremonial, the rite, are only valuable, as far as they assist the dull and wayward heart to offer what God does value!

For he does value, that is, he graciously condescends to receive, sincere and spiritual worship. That worship which the heart spontaneously offers, when filled with a sense of his holiness, greatness, goodness: when it looks up to him as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, and through him, the Father of those whom "he is not ashamed to call his brethren:" when it feels at once levelled to the dust by conscious unworthiness, and yet raised above the world by the covenant of grace. This is the worship which proceeds from the heart, when brought by the Holy Spirit to the knowledge of God. Low and feeble as it is, compared with the majesty of Him whom it addresses, still it is not inconsistent with his nature; and therefore it is the worship of *truth*. And not being dependent upon mere outward ceremony, though perhaps aided by it—it is the worship of the *spirit*. And such is the worship, we are assured, which *the Father seeks*. Such is the worship, which being begun here in the frailty and imperfection of our fallen nature, may be perfected hereafter, when that which is sinful is done away, when corruption is changed for incorruption, faith for sight, humili-

ation for glory. For they that have “washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple.”

LECTURE XXI.

DISCOURSE WITH THE DISCIPLES AT THE WELL IN SAMARIA.

JOHN iv. 27—38.

27. *And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman:¹ yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her?*

28. *The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men,*

29. *Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?*

30. *Then they went out of the city, and came unto him.*

31. *In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat.*

32. *But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of.*

33. *Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him ought to eat?*

¹ Explained above, v. 9. “For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.”

34. *Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.*

The state of mind which is implied in these gracious words, is full of comfort and encouragement to ourselves.

It is when the heart is filled with deep anxiety, that there is no desire of food. When the eldest servant of Abraham's house was sent to the city of Nahor to seek a wife for Isaac among his father's kindred, he was taken into the house where Rebekah dwelt with her friends. (Gen. xxiv. 33.)

“And there was set meat before him to eat: but he said, I will not eat, until I have told mine errand.”

So Samuel, when sent to anoint one of the sons of Jesse as the future king of Israel, when he missed David, the youngest, from the company, said to Jesse, (1 Sam. xvi. 11,) “Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither.”

It was the same in the present case. Jesus being wearied with his journey—(for he was bearing our weaknesses, and was subject to our infirmities,)—sat resting on the well. His disciples went for food; and on their return, aware of his necessity, pressed him to eat. He, the mean while, had forgotten the exhaustion of nature, and had fed upon the divine work in which he was engaged. *My meat and drink is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.*

But there is another encouragement arising out of this answer. The earnestness of the messenger depends, in part, on the earnestness of him whose message he conveys. The servant of Abraham was urgent, because Abraham was urgent. Samuel refused to be delayed, because God had sent him with a commission which required to be promptly executed. And so the eager anxiety of Jesus here, was to do the will and finish the work of his heavenly Father. What then was that will? The salvation of souls. And what that work? The making himself known as a Redeemer, the author of man's salvation. It is therefore the will of God, that no opportunity be lost of forwarding this work: it is his will that "all should come to repentance and the knowledge of the truth." Can there be a stronger inducement, either to receive the word of God ourselves, or to communicate it to others? To communicate it, is to do the work which God would have done: to receive it, is to conform to his will. He desires that man shall be happy in the knowledge of himself, and in the participation of his nature. And the Son of God rejoices in the prospect of imparting this happiness. He goes on to say,

35. *Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.*

36. *And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and*

gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.

37. *And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth.*

38. *I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.*

The husbandman rejoices in his mind, and feels his labour recompensed, when on looking towards the fields which he has tilled, he sees a just hope of future harvest. And so Jesus bids his disciples look towards the fields of Samaritan ignorance and superstition, and already perceive a promise, even before the expected time. The regular season was not yet: he had not yet been “lifted up” upon the cross, that he might “draw all men after him.” And yet the fields were white already: for the Samaritans had listened to the summons of the woman to whom he had revealed himself, and were now hastening to see him, who, as she affirmed, had *told her all things that ever she did: is not this the Christ?*

And this was an earnest of that harvest which the apostles should reap, and which should be to them “a crown of rejoicing” in the end. *He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal. He receiveth wages:* for the master whom he serves, “is not” unrighteous to forget his work and labour of love: and he *gathereth fruit unto life eternal:* he shall both “save himself and those that hear him.” “If the faithful servant reform

his own soul, that is fruit abounding to his account ; it is *fruit gathered to life eternal*. And if, beyond this, he is instrumental in saving the souls of others too, there is more *fruit gathered* : souls gathered to Christ are fruit, good fruit, the fruit which Christ seeks for : it is gathered for him, and it is gathered “to life eternal.”

In the part assigned them in this work of mercy, the apostles were greatly honoured and greatly favoured. In their case was the saying made good, *one soweth and another reapeth*. The seed of that harvest which was to be reaped now, had been sown during many centuries. Moses had laboured in it, when he conducted the Israelites to the field in which it should grow, and when he planted the law in preparation for the gospel which should follow. David and Isaiah, and the other prophets had also laboured, and tended the springing blade ; who prophesied of the grace that should come. But to these it was never permitted to say, “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.” To these it was not allowed to proclaim the glad tidings, how “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself :” how dispersing the long night of ignorance, he now commanded all men every where to “repent,” and “lay hold of everlasting life.” The gospel seed was sown, when that tradition was given to which the Samaritan woman

alluded : *I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ.* But the harvest was to be reaped, when it could be said, *I that speak unto thee am he.* And the fruit would be gathered, when those of the Samaritans who believed, and continued stedfast, should receive the end of this faith, even eternal life.

For this, as we should carefully observe, is the end, the object of all. For this, God prepared the field. For this, the Spirit tilled the field. For this, the prophets sowed. For this, Jesus went through his appointed labours. For this, the apostles at length put in their sickle ; that immortal souls, that *our* immortal souls, might be a harvest to the glory of God, and repay the Redeemer's toil. How great must be the blessedness in store for souls thus *gathered unto life eternal*, and purchased at so high a cost ! when both *he that soweth, and he that reapeth, shall rejoice together*, and no more blight or mildew, no more storm or tempest, shall endanger the harvest, now safely housed in the garner of the heavenly husbandman ? All will then unite in the same chorus, and the strain will be, " Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the praise." " For thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." " Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen." ²

² Rev. v. 9 ; vii. 12.

LECTURE XXII.

THE FAITH OF THE SAMARITANS.

JOHN iv. 39—42.

39. *And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did.*

40. *So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days.*

41. *And many more believed because of his own word;*

42. *And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.*

All Scripture is profitable for instruction. And this account of the inhabitants of Sychar may serve a very important purpose. It furnishes a striking example of the two sorts of faith which may exist in the mind, and which it is highly needful to distinguish.

The FIRST, is a belief grounded on the report of others. *Many believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did.*

The SECOND sort of faith goes further, and

depends on personal experience and conviction. *Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.* It will be useful to examine this.

The faith of the Samaritans, in the first instance, when they *went out from the city, and came unto Jesus*, had its foundation in the report which the woman made. She had assured them that Jesus had proved himself to be acquainted with all the acts of her life. It could only be accounted for in one way. *Is not this the Christ?* Can this man, to whom all hearts are open, and from whom no secrets are hid, be any other than HE whom we were looking for, who was to come into the world?

They concluded that it must be so, and *believed at her saying.*

This is the foundation of all faith in Christ. It is far from being all that is meant by “receiving him and believing in his name:” but it is the basis of it, and, as such, good, nay, needful. We believe that a Saviour of the world had been promised: had been foretold by prophets: had been prefigured by types: had been expected by devout men: and at last appeared in man’s nature about eighteen hundred years ago. We believe that he did many miracles: healed the sick, restored the dead: taught an excellent doctrine, exhorted sinners to repent: suffered death upon the cross, but

rose again from the tomb, and ascended to the place which he had left in the bosom of the Father. This we believe;—on the report of others;—on the report of those who lived at that time, and witnessed these things. They delivered these facts to their children and contemporaries: these handed them down to the generation that came after; and in this way they have always been believed by Christians, who could not possibly know the facts in any other manner, unless *the Christ* were to appear in every age. It was thus with the Samaritans. They believed first on the woman's report. They could not have known, for themselves, whether Jesus had declared to her the secret actions of her life. But she assured them so; and they believed her.

Now this is the sort of faith in which the inhabitants of a Christian country grow up. They know that they have been baptized in the name of Jesus. They know the principal circumstances of his life. They know that he suffered death upon the cross. And they have a vague idea that his death was a great benefit to mankind.

Such is the belief of children; and the belief of many who are no longer children goes no further. The belief which they have is good. They must believe that "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us;" that he "died for our sins, and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third

day according to the Scriptures.”¹ And these things they can only believe on the testimony of those who witnessed them. If the people here had not attended to their country-woman, saying, *Come and see a man, who told me all things that ever I did*, they would never have *heard him for themselves* at all.

But still we must bear in mind that this is only the beginning of that faith, by which “being justified, we have peace with God.” A person may believe all this, and feel no doubt of its truth: and yet may be no way influenced by it in his heart and life. It is the same with belief in the existence of God. How few are found ready to deny that “there is one God!”² And yet how few live as if they believed it; and either love, or fear, or reverence, or obey him! Nothing is more easy, and nothing more common, than to believe that Jesus was sent from God, that he was “approved as such by signs and wonders and mighty deeds,” that he most unjustly suffered a cruel death:—and yet to have none of that faith by which men are justified before God; and of which Jesus so frequently declared, “Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.” It is one thing to know a man to be an excellent physician; it is another thing to apply to him, and follow his counsel. So it is one thing to believe in the history of Jesus,

¹ See 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4.

² See James ii. 19.

as related in the Bible: and another thing to rely on him as “the Christ, the Saviour of the world,” by whom alone we obtain health or salvation.

But to this real and justifying faith the Samaritans proceeded, being led on to it by their own inquiry and experience. *Now we believe, not for thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.* On the testimony which the woman gave, they had besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days. And during those two days, though his discourses are not preserved, we may feel sure what their subject was. He would tell them, that “except they repent, they must all perish.” But that they need not perish. “For God had sent his Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.” “He that believeth on him is not condemned, but hath everlasting life.” These things he was often repeating, and those to whom he addressed them, cavilled at his words: or “went back, and walked no more with him.” But here was more of that “honest and good heart,” which the Lord opens, so that it “understands the things that are spoken.” So that *many believed because of his word*: and said, *We have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.*

And all must be able to affirm the same, who have any scriptural right to peace or hope as being

“reconciled to God” “through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” They must have understood the purpose of Christ’s coming in the flesh, and received his promises, as suited and offered to themselves. In infancy they had been enrolled within his covenant: in their youth they had named the name of Christ, and believed on their parent’s word or their country’s creed. But now they have sought further, and learnt more, and themselves discovered that *this is indeed the Christ*. They can assume the language of the apostle, “I know in whom I have believed, and that he is able to keep what I have committed to him unto the great day.”

Let none rest, till they can say this in their own persons, as the feeling of their own hearts. “For so an entrance shall be ministered unto them into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour.”

LECTURE XXIII.

A NOBLEMAN’S SON IS RESTORED FROM A DANGEROUS FEVER.

JOHN iv. 43—54.

43. *Now after two days he departed thence, and went into Galilee.*¹

¹ Passing in his way through Nazareth, which lay between Sychar and Galilee.

44. *For Jesus himself testified, that a prophet hath no honour in his own country.*²

45. *Then when he was come into Galilee, the Galileans received him, having seen all the things that he did at Jerusalem at the feast: for they also went unto the feast.*³

46. *So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum.*

47. *When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death.*

48. *Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.*

We have an example here, if examples were needed, how little riches can effect towards real happiness. They cannot confer it, because they can neither remove the causes of affliction with which the world abounds, nor do much to sooth them. This nobleman, whose son lay at the point of death, found nothing to tranquillize his distressed feelings, either in his honours or his wealth. Affliction did more for him than either. Affliction brought him as a suppliant to the feet of Jesus.

The treatment which he received there was not exactly the same which other suppliants received. St. Matthew relates, (viii. 5—13,) how “when

² See on Mark vi. 4; Luke iv. 24.

³ i. e. it was their custom to attend the feast of the passover.

Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him." But here the petitioner met with a rebuke; though higher in station, and though making his entreaty, not for a servant, but a son. Instead of answering, "I will come and heal him," *Jesus said unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.*

No doubt, in either case the answer was exactly that which was most suitable. We know that the centurion was a proper object of encouragement; for he at once replied to our Lord, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed." Jesus was well aware of this; "for he knew what was in man." And we may be equally sure that he read something in the heart of this nobleman, which made him less fitted for a prompt and unhesitating compliance. *Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.* Now signs and wonders were part of the evidence of Jesus's divinity which should lead men to believe. But they were not the only proofs of the power in which he came. "Gracious words proceeded out of his mouth." The purity of his precepts and the authority of his doctrine showed that God was in those later days speaking unto man by his Son.⁴

⁴ See Heb. i. 1, 2.

Perhaps the nobleman had appeared insensible to signs like these. Perhaps for this reason Jesus thought it good to humble him, instead of immediately declaring, "I will come and heal him." The man, however, like the Canaanite woman in a case somewhat similar, receives the reproof in a meek and quiet spirit: he opens not his mouth, makes no complaint or defence, but urges his request once more.

49. *The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die.*

50. *Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way.*

The man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him. If there had been any thing amiss before, any want of faith in his seeking the actual presence of Jesus, instead of saying, Speak the word only, and my son shall be healed: this was now removed. *He believed.* He exercised the same faith as St. Paul commends in Abraham; (Rom. iv. 20;) "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness."

51. *And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth.*

52. *Then inquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.*

53. *So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house.*

54. *This is again the second miracle that Jesus did, when he was come out of Judea into Galilee.*

It is proper to remark here, that these healings of the body are emblems of the recovery of the soul. Jesus said to the anxious father, *Go thy way, thy son liveth.* Though this was spoken at the distance of a day's journey from the scene of the illness, it was soon found that the fever had been obedient to his command. It is the same with the restoration of the soul. Though he is in heaven, and we who believe in him and make our supplications to him, are on earth; he still will speak the word, and the sin which is repented of shall be pardoned; the power of Satan which threatens to destroy, shall be kept in subjection; the lusts which war against the soul, shall be subdued. Only let there be the same sense of our own weakness; the same confidence in Christ's strength; the same earnestness in prayer, "for grace to help in time of need."

It should also be kept in constant remembrance that in one sense, the case of this parent is the case of all parents. His necessity is their necessity, and his prayer should be their prayer. For without the Lord Jesus, their child must likewise die.

Believing this, let them “ask in faith, nothing wavering.” Let them ask at the font, when their infant is “received into the congregation of Christ’s flock,” that he will “mercifully look upon their child, wash him and sanctify him with the Holy Ghost,” and make him an “inheritor of his everlasting kingdom.”⁵ Let them daily continue to entreat, that the good work which has been begun, may be carried on unto the end; and the child be kept “by the power of God, through faith unto salvation.” We may humbly, but confidently, hope and trust, that children shall not finally perish, who are children of these prayers.

LECTURE XXIV.

A CRIPPLE IS HEALED AT THE POOL OF BETHESDA.

JOHN v. 1—9.

1. *After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.*¹

2. *Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market, a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda,² having five porches.*

⁵ See Baptismal Service.

¹ So this feast, the Passover, required. See Deut. xvi. 16.

² That is, the house of mercy.

3. *In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water.*

4. *For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water : whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in, was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.*

This place, where a number of diseased persons were collected together, too nearly resembles the picture of our moral world. What does the world contain, but what these porches of Bethesda contained? *A great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered.* Impotent we are, unable to fulfil the commands of God ; not loving him with all our heart, nor our neighbour as ourselves. The apostle has described our state ; “ I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.” Blind too we are, as to our best and truest interests ; and too often loving darkness rather than light ; or boasting that “ we see,” when in truth we know nothing as we ought to know.

These moral evils, also, were brought on in the same way as the bodily evils mentioned in the history. Adam sinned ; and with sin came death : and with death, all that leads to death ; all disease, and pain, and infirmity. Again, Adam sinned, and the soul became corrupt : hence the sinful character of his posterity : hence their blindness in spiritual things, their enmity towards God : till he in his mercy lightens our darkness, and restores

us to himself. Let us be thankful that there is a provision for this, of which the pool of Bethesda is the emblem.

The multitude of diseased persons lying there, were *waiting for the moving of the water*. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in, was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.

So too must the diseases of the soul be cured; healed from above: the *water must be troubled*; the heart must be moved with a sense of its condition and its danger, and this must come from the Holy Spirit: he must descend and prepare the soul to receive the remedy which Christ proposes, to apply the means which he prescribes, and by which it may be made whole of whatsoever disease it has.

5. *And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years.*

6. *When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?*

7. *The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me.*

When sin is the disease to be removed, men are not always *willing to be made whole*. They do not feel the evil; therefore they do not desire a cure.

It is very different in the case of a bodily dis-

order : that we do feel, and are eager to be rid of. There was no hesitation as to the wish of this unhappy patient. But he had little hope : he had no friend to assist him, and others continually *stepped down before him*. And this exhibits another symptom of our moral disease. This poor man had not strength to keep his turn, and they had not the justice to give it him. To step before another : to obtain some good for ourselves, without looking to others' interests, often by supplanting them—this is the way of the world. The gospel would change that evil way ; and bids us live, “ in honour preferring one another : ” and says, “ Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth.” And when the spirit of these precepts is more generally observed, the course of this world and the will of God will more nearly agree together.

8. *Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.*

9. *And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked : and on the same day was the sabbath.*

Thus he who had no earthly friend, found that one greater than any earthly friend was here. What he had so long and so hopelessly waited for, Christ at once effected for him. Christ felt the pity which his fellow creatures did not feel ; and together with the sympathy to pity, he had the power to cure. *Immediately the man was made*

whole, and took up his bed, and walked ; giving this evident proof of the completeness of his restoration.

I must now show, that the cure he performed on the body of this cripple, is an example of the healing power which the same Lord exercises on the soul.

All mankind are not diseased, *halt, and withered* in their body, like these persons who were gathered at the side of the pool of Bethesda. In respect of bodily health and strength, there is a great difference among men.

There is no such difference as to the soul. Here all are by nature alike. "Every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God. For that all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God ; being justified (if justified at all) freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." We lately received it from his own mouth, "He that believeth not is condemned already :"³ lies under the condemnation of his own natural and actual sin.

For the remedy of this miserable state, it pleased God to send his Son, that as many as believe in him might be freed from this condemnation. And he comes to the world, as he came to the pool of Bethesda. There he found those lying who were afflicted with diseases, and says to one, *Wilt thou be made whole ?* So he comes into the world, the

³ John iii. 18—36.

inhabitants of which are oppressed with sin; oppressed both by its present misery and its future consequences: and he says to all who hear the Gospel of the kingdom, Will ye be made whole?

We might suppose that all would be ready to reply, 'Thanks be to God for his condescending mercy! And in one sense all are ready to answer thus: there is no man who does not desire the pardon of his offences; no man who would not gladly be safe from the wrath of his Maker, the sentence of his Judge. If this were the whole offer, all would embrace it hastily. But they know that it goes further, and implies more: they know that it is an offer of deliverance from sin itself, as well as from the consequences of sin. Wilt thou be made whole of thy plague of a sinful heart? Wilt thou be delivered from those works of the flesh against which God's wrath and indignation are revealed? "They that do such things, cannot inherit the kingdom of God:" and therefore before thou canst inherit that kingdom, thou must be delivered from them.

Alas! too many feel no need of such deliverance. These things give them no pain, no distress, no anxiety. And too many others, who cannot but confess their need, have no real wish or desire for spiritual health. However they might be glad to be freed from danger, they are not willing to be freed from sin. They had rather indulge their sin and risk the consequence: they have not faith enough to cut off the right arm, or pluck out the

right eye—to abandon habits which have become part of themselves—rather than with all their guilt remaining, to encounter the “tribulation and anguish revealed against every soul of man that doeth evil.”

Otherwise, the gospel would afford them the same comfort which was given in this history. Jesus saith unto the impotent man, *Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.* And such is his universal offer, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”⁴ His name is called Jesus, “for he shall save his people from their sins.”⁵

Let us, at least, inquire, whether we have both understood this offer and accepted it. He that believeth in the Son of God, hath the consciousness of it in himself:⁶ and can tell whether he is looking up to him for that remedy of his soul’s disease, which the impotent man received in his crippled limbs at the pool of Bethesda.

⁴ Acts ii. 38.

⁵ Matt i. 21.

⁶ 1 John v 10.

LECTURE XXV.

NARRATIVE OF THE MIRACLE AT BETHESDA CONCLUDED.

JOHN v. 10—14.

10. *The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed.*

11. *He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk.*

It was a just and natural reply on the part of this poor man. Who He was that had made him whole he wist not: but this he felt at once, that whoever had power to effect the cure, must also have authority to permit him to carry home the bed on which he was lying. But the Jews, instead of attending to the miracle, or learning the lesson which it taught, “sought to slay Jesus, because he did these things on the sabbath day.”¹ We cannot, therefore, think so favourably of them, as to believe that they were led to censure the man from any proper feeling, any honest zeal for God’s honour. It were possible that they might have censured him, in a state of mind like that of our Lord himself,

¹ Verse 16.

when he said, "Make not my Father's house a house of merchandise." In the same spirit, they might have rebuked the man who made their Father's day a day of ordinary labour. But their subsequent conduct shows that they were actuated by malevolence, and not by piety.

12. *Then asked they him, What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk?*

13. *And he that was healed wist not who it was: for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in that place.*

14. *Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.*

We need not conclude from this remark, that the man's disease had been a special judgment: Jesus takes the opportunity of declaring to him, that there is a judgment against sin, which must fall upon those who continue in sin; and more especially on those who continue in sin after mercy has been shown them, and the light manifested to them. "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins; but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries."²

Yet how is this command to be obeyed, *Sin no more*? Nature is not altered, temptations are not

² Heb. x. 26.

removed, because a disease is cured, or an affliction taken away.

He who issues the command, will also afford the power. Without his power, the cripple could not have risen, and taken up his bed, and walked. But he did this at the command of Jesus; did what he had been long striving to do in vain. And that he did it, was the proof of his cure. And such may be, and such must be, the case with the heart which is pardoned and reconciled to God through faith in Christ Jesus. It must give proof of the change wrought in it. It must rise "from the death of sin to the life of righteousness." It must leave in the pool where it has been washed, its unruly passions, its unsanctified desires, all that is displeasing to God and unfit for heaven: and it must take up, instead, the various graces which adorn the doctrine of Christ; must "add to faith, virtue, and knowledge, and temperance, and patience, and godliness, and brotherly kindness, and charity."

Indeed, what happened to this cripple at Bethesda, must happen, in substance, to all who partake of the benefit of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. He had felt his wretchedness: had thought within himself, how he might obtain relief; and at last received it through the mercy of the Saviour.

So must every Christian reflect within himself: I have offended against Almighty God, and cannot

appear before him in judgment. My nature is corrupt : so that “ the good that I would, I do not ; but the evil which I would not, that I do.” How can I obtain remission of sins past ? How can the stony heart be taken away, and be replaced by the tender heart which feels the love of God and holiness ? One method alone is pointed out. “ There is one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.” He must recover me. He must wash me from my sinfulness. He must strengthen me. He must lift me above the dust of this world, and enable me to keep the paths of righteousness : he must engraft upon me the fruits of the Spirit, approved of God, but not natural to the heart of man.

So it was with those to whom the gospel was first made known, and who had been living in all the evil of our unrenewed nature. “ Some of you,” says St. Paul to the Corinthians, (1 Cor. vi. 9—11,) “ were once adulterers, and thieves, and covetous, and drunkards, and revilers, and extortioners.” But now, he proceeds, “ ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” In the name of the Lord Jesus, they had laid aside their evil habits ; had risen above the darkness in which they had been lying, and become able to walk before God in righteousness and holiness.

The difficulty is to feel the need of this ; so to feel it, and to seek and apply the remedy. The cripple felt his need, but he had no hope of remedy.

Lord, I have no one, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool. For surely I *would* be made whole ; but in my helpless, miserable state, what hope is there ?

When any one feels this in respect to his soul, angels begin to rejoice over him. When any one feels—I would, indeed, gladly be cleansed from my sin : I do not cling to it, though it still adheres to me. But I have no one who shall enable me to overcome the evil dispositions of my heart, and the evil habits of my life. “ The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, so that I cannot do the things that I would.” “ Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?”

This is the state of mind when the offer of Jesus Christ, as conveyed in the gospel, is indeed glad tidings. He says, *Wilt thou be made whole ?* He promises deliverance : he engages to supply all our need. And when the heart is convinced that “ without holiness no man can see the Lord,” and that without “ the Spirit of God in Christ Jesus” no man can attain unto holiness, we shall eagerly close with the offer, and “ thank God for his unspeakable gift.” *Wilt thou be made whole ?* That is my earnest desire. My earnest desire is to be purified from the corruption which I derived from Adam, and to become a child of God through the adoption that is in Christ Jesus.

Christ approves of the heart which thus moves towards him, and accepts his gracious invitation. He said to the diseased cripple, “ Rise, take up

thy bed, and walk.” He says to the believing penitent, “Rise, thy sins are forgiven thee.” The stain of thy guilt is washed away. Being justified by faith, thou art at peace with God. *Behold, thou art made whole*; but *go, and sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee*. The apostle says, “It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.”¹ Go, then, and for the remainder of thy life walk before God in righteousness and holiness. Take thy affections from things below, and raise them to things above. Rise beyond the trifling concerns of this world, or rather so carry them on, as to make them serve towards thy eternal interests. This must be the proof of thy soul’s health; as the strength with which he rose, took up his bed and walked, was the proof that the cripple was healed who had lain so long in the porches of Bethesda.

¹ 2 Peter ii. 21.

LECTURE XXVI.

JESUS REASONS WITH THE JEWS, CONCERNING HIS AUTHORITY AND SPIRITUAL POWER.

JOHN v. 15—27.

15. *The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus, which had made him whole.*

16. *And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day.*

17. *But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.*

Such is the reason which our Lord alleges for healing on the sabbath-day. *My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.* The Father does not restrain the operations of his providence, but sends his rain and his sun on the sabbath as on other days, that the comfort and welfare of man may be promoted. I do the same. I do not allow a blind man to continue in despair, or a diseased cripple to languish unrelieved, because it is the sabbath day. I bid them anoint their eyes with clay, and they receive their sight; I bid them carry home the bed on which they have been lying, and they carry it: these works of mercy I perform, and the

sabbath is no more profaned by them than by the shining of the sun.

By this argument he virtually affirmed, what he affirms elsewhere in plain terms, that he and the Father are one. So the people perceived, and were indignant.

18. *Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.*

19. *Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do : for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.*

20. *For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth ; and will show him greater works than these, that ye may marvel.*

21. *For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them ; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.*

22. *For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son :*

23. *That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.*

The Jews had grounded their indignation against Jesus on a pretence of zeal for God's honour. He had *made himself equal with God*. If this their feeling had been sincere, it had been excusable. Jesus does not blame it ; but calmly

shows them, that if they wish to honour the Father they must honour him; for he represents the Father. He did not come independently; he came in the Father's name: he did not act independently; *the Son can do nothing of himself*. What miracles he had done, he had done as one with the Father. And greater things than they had seen hitherto, were yet to come. They should see that as the Father hath life in himself, *even so the Son quickeneth whom he will*. For the Father *had committed all judgment unto the Son*: had given him complete authority, *because he is the Son of man*. They had already been witnesses of his power over the body; and the time was now at hand, when they should witness his power over the soul.

24. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.*

25. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live.*

26. *For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.*

27. *And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.*

Here Jesus repeats what he had before asserted, that he brought an offer of everlasting life to

those who were in a state of death ; and that all who should *hear his word and believe in him who sent him*,—believe the Father's message,—should *pass from death unto life*. And there should be such : *the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God ; and they that hear shall live*.

Many important truths which are implied in the whole dispensation of the gospel, are collected here in one brief sentence. Those who are without Christ, are *dead*. Christ hath power to *quicken* them. Those whom he quickens *shall live*.

1. Those who are without Christ in the world, are in a state which can only be adequately described as a state of death. Because they are useless as to all the great objects for which human life is given, as much as if they were already cold and inactive in the grave ; useless to the service of God, useless to every spiritual purpose ; and, because being so, they may be described according to law as dead, condemned in the sight of God, and liable to his wrath.⁵ The man was in a state like this, who is represented by our Lord, (Luke xii. 19,) as thus communing with himself, “Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years ; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.” What is such a life, as far as God, as the soul, or eternity are concerned, what but a living death ?

⁵ See Eph. ii. 3—6.

2. To these Christ has the power of giving life, that they may rise out of the darkness in which they are lying. *As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.* His Spirit infused into their hearts gives them a new existence. For whereas they were before alive to this world and dead unto God, now they are “alive unto God,” and comparatively dead unto this world. And whereas otherwise their souls were left to perish, whilst their mortal bodies were alone considered; now they “mortify their members which are upon the earth,” and seek first and chiefly what may nourish and strengthen their immortal souls. This is LIFE; it deserves to be so called; and it is a new life, not that to which our carnal nature tends: and it is a life which Christ bestows and maintains, and by which he fulfils the promise, that to “as many as receive him, he gives power to become the sons of God.” Zacchæus, as described by St. Luke,⁶ was one of the first examples of this, when having been “according to his former lusts in his ignorance,” accustomed to live to himself alone, he entered upon a new course, and began to live unto God; when he resolved to be as earnest for heaven as he had hitherto been for this present world.

3. Those then, who do thus *live*, are those who *hear the voice of the Son of God*, and come unto

⁶ Chap. xix.

him “that they may have life.” Zacchæus did this; he received Christ joyfully, and passed from death unto life. Others refused to do it: as the rich young man who went away sorrowing, when he found on what terms the offer of eternal life was made; and that he could only live unto God, by being dead unto this world. He indeed heard the voice of the Son of God with his outward ears, but it did not enter into his heart, and like too many in all ages “he went away.”

Thus are set before all to whom the gospel is proclaimed, “life and good, and death and evil.”⁷ Our hearts, examined as to their inward feelings, and compared with the habits of our life,⁸ can alone determine whether we ourselves *have everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation*. For this is certain, that if we have *passed from death unto life*, then we are “dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”⁹

⁷ Deut. xxx. 15.

⁸ See 1 John iii. and iv. throughout.

⁹ Rom. vi. 11.

LECTURE XXVII.

THE RESURRECTION TO ETERNAL LIFE,
OR ETERNAL DEATH, DECLARED.

JOHN v. 28, 29.

28. *Marvel not at this : for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice,*

29. *And shall come forth ; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life ; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.*

These verses declare the important fact, on which the whole of religion rests. As St. Paul argues, (1 Cor. xv. 29,) “ What shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?” Why do they live in the faith of one who, confessedly, died and was buried, “if so be that the dead rise not?” “ Let us eat and drink ;” let us follow the devices and desires of our own hearts,—if we may die to-morrow, and die for ever. But, as the apostle proceeds, “ be not deceived :” *for the hour is coming, when all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth,* and “ appear before the judgment-seat of God, to receive according to the things done in the body.”

“But some men will say, How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?”

Without doubt, it is a wonderful thought, that the sea should cast up her dead, and that death and the grave should deliver up the dead that are in them, and that the soul should animate once more a body, which shall be to each individual as his own body. This is a matter which we are not concerned to examine closely. God reveals to us the fact. “He who raised up Jesus from the dead, shall also quicken our mortal bodies by his Spirit which dwelleth in us.” That these bodies will undergo a great change, is certain. What is “sown in corruption,” will be “raised in incorruption.” “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.” He that effects the whole, “shall change our vile bodies,” and “the dead shall be raised incorruptible.” But still it will be the same body that died : in the same sense as the corn which springs up in the field, or is ripening for harvest, is the same corn which was dropped into the ground, with a form altogether different. It will be animated by the same mind, the mind conscious of itself, conscious of its own thoughts and feelings. This mind God will again invest with a body, and to every mind his own body ; according to that mighty energy which has all things within its power. No man can doubt this power who contemplates himself ; how fearfully and wonderfully he is made. The same Deity

which made him what he is, can make him what he is to be, and what he is to remain for ever.

And in the fact here so plainly declared, the resurrection to life or death eternal, we have the explanation of whatever might seem surprising in the whole dispensation of the gospel. The Son of God is made flesh, and dwells amongst us. Great is the mystery. But is there not a cause, if *all that are in the graves shall come forth, they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation!* Do we reflect on what may be suffered, or what may be enjoyed, throughout eternity? And if we do, can we wonder that he who saw all in a state of death, and knew in what that death would issue, should be so moved by the goodness of his divine nature as to humble himself, and “bear our sins in his own body,” that “by all means he might save some?” that as “by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one many might be made righteous?”¹

Should any be disposed to doubt what is here affirmed, the eternal happiness of the faithful, and the eternal misery of the wicked, let them turn their minds to the great fact which we all avow, the incarnation of the Son of God. Men are unwilling to believe that so much can depend upon

¹ Rom. v. 19. See the whole argument.

the present time: they divert their thoughts from a subject which distresses them: and Satan is now ready to whisper, as he did of old, "Ye shall not surely die:" you may disobey the commands of God, you may neglect his revealed will; but you need fear no evil; "ye shall not surely die."

Ask yourselves, then, would the Son of God have come in our nature, and have died in our nature, if there were no reality in what is declared to us concerning heaven and hell: if the kingdom of God were not inconceivably glorious, or if what is described as "outer darkness," as "the lake of fire," "the second death," "the worm that never dieth," meant nothing substantial, nothing very terrible, meant any thing except the greatest imaginable misery?

Try then to live with the impression before your minds of that scene which these words represent. Consider the feelings which it would awaken in you, if you saw it actually taking place; the heavens passing away, the elements melting, the earth disappearing: but the dead, small and great, standing before God, to be judged out of those things which are written in the books, according to their works. These things it is the business of faith to represent to us, before they happen, in order that when they happen we may be found ready. And we ought to stir up and encourage this faith. A Christian of former times was used to say that the sound seemed continually in his

ears, “ Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment : the judge is set ; the books are opening ; sentence is passing.” And it is surely wise, if we believe in the resurrection as a doctrine, to bring it before our minds as a practical truth by which this life is to be governed. It will teach us to value time, and to redeem it : to restrain every unholy thought, and word, and action ; and carefully to regulate that life, which will soon be narrowly examined by an all-seeing Judge.

LECTURE XXVIII.

TESTIMONY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST, OF GOD, AND OF THE SCRIPTURES, TO THE DIVINITY OF JESUS.

JOHN v. 30—40.

30. *I can of mine own self do nothing : as I hear, I judge : and my judgment is just ; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.*

31. *If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true.*

32. *There is another that beareth witness of me : and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true.*

Jesus had been declaring great things, many of them new things : so that they marvelled. They

were not merely things to be assented to, as abstract truths, or points of doctrine ; but they were truths which if admitted must govern the heart and life. He had been declaring himself equal with God. And this was not only a philosophical speculation : but if so, he must be believed and obeyed as God. He had been declaring the resurrection of the dead. This too might be admitted ; if it did not follow, that if we admit it, we must live as those who are to give account of the things done in the body, and to be recompensed according to the works, whether they be good or bad. When a truth is to be followed by these practical consequences, the authority by which it is supported must be seen.

He therefore concludes his discourse by showing the grounds of that authority. He had already asserted it, saying, “ The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son ; that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father.” This he had himself affirmed. But no one is received on his own unsupported word. *If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true*, that is, is not to be at once received as true. Though it may be true, yet according to the laws of evidence which men are obliged to establish on account of the deceitfulness which prevails, it requires further confirmation. So that he proceeds to appeal to three testimonies, by which they might be convinced that his witness was true.

First to that of John the Baptist : next, to that of the Father : and thirdly, to that of the Scriptures.

33. *Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth.*

34. *But I receive not testimony from man : but these things I say, that ye might be saved.*

35. *He was a burning and a shining light : and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light.*

John bore the authority of a divine commission ; a commission which was acknowledged. People of all ranks sought him : looked up to him for a while as *a burning and a shining light, and were willing for a season to rejoice in his light.* And nothing could be clearer than the testimony which he gave, when “ he saw Jesus coming unto him, and said, Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man who is preferred before me ; for he was before me.”¹

2. The second testimony was greater still. “ If we believe the witness of men, the witness of God is greater.”

36. *But I have greater witness than that of John : for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.*

37. *And the Father himself, which hath sent me,*

¹ John i. 29, 30.

hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape.

38. *And ye have not his word abiding in you : for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not.*

The Father had borne witness to the Son, and was continually bearing it: *the works which he did, which the Father had given him to finish, bare witness of him that the Father had sent him.*

“If he had not done among them the works which none other man did,” they had been more excusable in rejecting him: for whosoever professes to have a message from God, must produce sufficient proof of the authority which he claims. But this he did produce: and they should have believed him for the very works’ sake.² If all had had the simplicity of Nicodemus, all would have acknowledged, like Nicodemus, that “no man could do the miracles which he did, except God be with him.”³

3. The third testimony to which Jesus appeals, is that of the Scriptures.

39. *Search the Scriptures ; for in them ye think ye have eternal life : and they are they which testify of me.*

40. *And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.*

The Scriptures concluded the evidence, and confirmed the whole. The Jewish people were bound to search these ; for in these they *thought they had eternal life* : and if they had searched them with a true and candid heart, they would have proved to

² John xiv. 11.

³ John iii. 2.

them what the star shining in the East proved to “the wise men;” they would have led them to believe that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, so that “believing, they might have life through his name,” might *come unto him, that they might have life.*

For consider what a Jewish inquirer would have discovered, had he followed the counsel given him, and *searched the Scriptures* for a testimony of Jesus. He would remember how Moses had said, that God would raise up unto them “a prophet from the midst of them, of their brethren, like unto him, unto whom they should hearken.”⁴ The question therefore would be, Is this HE that should come? It would be then found, that all which the Scriptures pronounced concerning his birth, had been complied with. It would be found that there had been the voice of one crying in the wilderness, “Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.” It would be found that, according to the language of Isaiah, “a virgin had conceived, and borne a son:” that this son was of the line of David: was born in Bethlehem of Judea: was born at the very time when according to the prediction of Daniel, devout men were looking for “the consolation of Israel:” and had been born with such signs preceding, attending, and following, as might well persuade them that this was “of a truth that prophet which should come into

⁴ Deut. xviii. 15.

the world.” Therefore the direct affirmation of John, who had declared him to be the Christ ; and the testimony of the Father, who had borne witness to his beloved Son, and was still bearing witness by the miracles which he performed ; would be confirmed and corroborated by an exact agreement with all which the Scriptures had foretold.

So just is our Lord’s conclusion : *Ye have not his word abiding in you : for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not.*† Had his word been abiding in their knowledge, or a love of it in their hearts, they would have *come to him that they might have life*. But there was nothing in their character in common with that of the Father ; nothing which led them, when they saw the Son whom he had sent, to look on him as precious and honourable. As Isaiah had foretold, they “ saw no beauty in him that they should desire him.”

Let their unbelief be a warning to us, “ on whom the ends of the world are come.” “ For we have not followed cunningly devised fables when we have believed the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” For we know, that “ he received from God the Father honour and glory,” when the *works which the Father had given him to finish*, bare witness of him. “ We have also a sure word of prophecy :”⁵ if we *search the Scrip-*

⁵ See 2 Peter i. 16.

tures, we perceive that *they testify of him*. And these assurances are given to them “that believe on the name of the Son of God; that they may know that they have eternal life, and that they may believe on the name of the Son of God.”⁶ “For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end.”⁷

LECTURE XXIX.

REASONS ARE ALLEGED, WHY THE JEWS REJECTED JESUS.

JOHN V. 41—47.

41. *I receive not honour from men.*

42. *But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you.*

43. *I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.*

44. *How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?*

Jesus had come into the world, as the Redeemer of the world. To the Jews, especially, he had

⁶ 1 John v. 13.

⁷ Heb. iii. 14.

first appeared, as the Messiah whom they had been expecting. That he might accomplish the purpose for which he came, he must be trusted; be believed in. He showed them, therefore, in the former part of this discourse, that he had all the testimony in his favour which could either be required or granted: he had the testimony of John the Baptist, he had the testimony of God himself, he had the testimony of their Scriptures. If they did not receive this testimony, there must be some reason for it; something which perverted their minds, and prevented their seeing the truth which lay before them. And here he shows what that obstacle was. *I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you.* Ye do not love the things which God approves, or desire the things which God permits, or do the things which he commands. Ye have other love, other desires, other affections; so that ye have nothing in common with him who comes *in the Father's name*: condemning what he condemns, and prescribing what he sanctions. *If another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive*: for he would be of the world, and ye love the world: he, *coming in his own name*, would “savour the things of men:” and so do ye. This worldly, carnal spirit, is a barrier between you and truth. *How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?* How can ye believe? how can ye attend to the proofs of my divinity,

whilst there is in you a prevailing bias on the other side, whilst your minds are so swayed by earthly motives that the judgment is not free ?

It is as true now as it was then, that before the mind can be brought to any practical faith in Christ, it must escape from the trammels of this world. Men must cease to care for *receiving honour one of another*. They must not be kept back and restrained by considering what others think or others practise, but must enjoy a liberty within themselves of forming a right judgment, and acting on what the judgment approves. Demetrius of Ephesus, for example, was not likely to attain a true estimate of the authority of the apostles, (Acts xix. 24,) when he began by saying that if Paul was listened to, “the craft by which he and the workmen of like occupation had their wealth was in danger of being set at nought.” His mind was pre-engaged to his wealth, and could exercise no freedom of opinion. So with the Jewish people. The elders had decreed, that whosoever adhered to Jesus, “should be put out of the synagogue.” Before, therefore, a man could reasonably or justly decide whether he were the Messiah or no, he must be independent of the opinion of the elders ; ready, if needful, to forfeit it. If he sought *the honour which cometh from man*, he would be incapable of judging concerning Christ’s title to honour, which was proscribed and rejected of man.

What was needful then, that a man might confess Jesus to be the Christ, is equally needful now, that men may live as true and consistent Christians. They must view the precepts of the gospel, unbiassed by the opinions and practices of those around them. It is a just saying, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." If any man is not able to defy the reproaches which may be cast on him, or the interests which he may endanger, or the inclinations which he must combat, for the sake of living as a faithful disciple of Christ Jesus, he may in words acknowledge him, but he will "in works deny him." And this, alas ! is very possible—such is the deceitfulness of the heart—while he may think himself secure. He may be as little aware of his own inconsistency, as the unbelieving Jews: and as much without excuse. They profess to follow Moses, and the words of Moses would condemn them. He professes to believe in Jesus, and the words of Jesus will convict him.

Our Lord proceeds to show this of the Jews.

45. *Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust.*

46. *For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me.*

47. *But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?*

Thus the very foundation on which they were resting, and thought they stood secure, would fail

and sink from under them. They “made their boast of God, and rested in the law,”¹ the law given by Moses. That very boast and confidence would supply the ground of their condemnation. For Moses wrote of Christ: taught the people to expect him: that Moses who said unto the children of Israel, (Acts vii. 37,) “A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear.” Besides which, the whole law which Moses appointed was but as a preparation, designed to lead men towards Him that should come.² This the Jews perceived not, because “their minds were blinded.” And “even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart.”³

We wonder at their perverseness. Let us look at it as a fearful warning. “Every way of a man is right in his own eyes.” But “there is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.”⁴

¹ Rom. ii. 17.

² See Gal. iii. 19—24.

³ See 2 Cor. iii. 14, 15.

⁴ Prov. xiv. 12.

LECTURE XXX.

THE DISCIPLES ARE COMMANDED TO GATHER UP THE REMAINING FRAGMENTS, AFTER FIVE THOUSAND PERSONS HAD BEEN MIRACULOUSLY SUPPLIED WITH FOOD.

JOHN vi. 1—13.

1. *After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias.*

2. *And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased.*

3. *And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples.*

4. *And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh.*

5. *When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?*

6. *And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do.*

7. *Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.*

8. *One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him,*

9. *There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves,*

and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?

10. *And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.*

11. *And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.*

12. *When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.*

13. *Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.*

This was one of the occasions when our Lord saw fit to exercise his power, in order to supply the wants of those who followed him, and heard his words. He refused to do this in his own behalf in the wilderness: but these sheep must not be allowed to go empty away.

He seems here to give an intimation that nothing is lost by earnestness in religion; that they who seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, shall find other things added to them, according to their need. Without changing the order of nature, it proves so in the order of Providence. "Godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

The concluding remark is pointed and peculiar. *Gather up the fragments which remain, that nothing be lost.* So forcibly is this commanded as to require particular attention. Notwithstanding the plentifulness of the provision, and the ease with which it had been supplied; yet the fragments are to be gathered up, that nothing be lost or wasted.

All classes of men are concerned in this precept. The RICH are concerned in it. He who uttered it was rich: he had shown himself rich in power, beyond all human wealth. He proves by his conduct both on this and on other occasions, that those who are blessed by the bounty of Providence are intended to enjoy the gifts bestowed on them. But he prohibits all waste and extravagance. He suffers nothing to be squandered or thrown away which might improve the condition or assist the comforts of others.

The POOR too are concerned in it, who often waste more, in proportion, than the rich, upon what is utterly needless or superfluous. There are few who, according to their situation in life, might not be in what are called easy circumstances, if they had always attended to the maxim, *that nothing be lost*, nothing wasted by being spent unnecessarily or unprofitably.

But we may carry this further than merely as a lesson of frugality. There are other fragments, besides those of our daily bread, or daily income, which we are here taught to gather up and save.

1. There are fragments of TIME.

Though there is but one thing of real importance to be done, very few persons can bestow the principal portion of their time on that great object. The main part of life cannot be spent in hearing, or reading, or meditating upon eternity. It must be employed in active business of some sort or other. But meanwhile our hearts must be fixed, through all this active business, on the grand concern; on that which is beyond; on the end of our faith, the salvation of the soul. We are travellers; we are on a journey; we have many interests upon the road; we have much to call for our attention as we pass along: but after all, *the object* is not the road, or the interests of the road; but the journey's end.

For this purpose the duty is to *gather up the fragments* of our time, *that nothing may be lost*. Notwithstanding all the labours, all the active duties which are indispensable, how many hours in every week are commonly spent in sloth, in idle conversation, in pursuits which profit not? If those fragments were collected together for a week, or a month, or a year, what good purpose they might serve! As multitudes might be rich, who now are poor, if they had carefully husbanded the resources which God had put into their hands: so multitudes, who are ignorant, might be rich in the most precious knowledge, if they had put to good account the moments which they have wasted and

misapplied. Many a poor man would be happy to redeem, at the close of life, the sums which in his youth he has thrown away : and many an ignorant man, in the decay of his strength, has still more reason to lament the time which he once neglected, and in which he might have learnt to become “ wise unto salvation.” A slight excuse is enough for a man whilst death seems distant. He quiets his conscience whilst he says, I am busy, I am hard working, I am constantly employed ; and God is not “ austere :” he will not expect much, where little has been given. But this is seen at last to be a vain device of Satan, when death actually comes, and finds the soul unprepared ; much business done, but none of that which was most needful ; none of that which might have been performed, if all the fragments of time had been gathered up, and employed for the purpose which they are given to serve.

2. Another hint of exhortation may grow out of this same precept. If ye profess to be servants of Jesus Christ, gather up all your opportunities of showing your zeal for his service ; let nothing be lost, by which you can display your love for him and your desire to please him. Some may have much of this power, and some less ; but all may find some fragments both of talent and opportunity, if they are careful to seize them. How few who are ignorant, would remain without instruction ; how few that are thoughtless, would continue with-

out warning ; if all were careful to make the most of their means of usefulness !

And is there no encouragement ? He to whom this service is paid, “ is not unrighteous, to forget your labours of love : ” he will gather up the smallest fragments of service which you may have employed in his cause, he will let nothing be lost of obedience to his will. All will be set to your account at the great day. And though you will not venture to look back upon such works as grounds of acceptance, or as entitling you to reward ; he will receive them as tokens of faith and love—such tokens as are agreeable to our heavenly Father. “ For in this is the Father glorified,” that they who are his adopted children through Christ Jesus, “ bring forth much fruit ; ” and “ abound in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as they know, that their labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

LECTURE XXXI.

THE DISCIPLES, OVERTAKEN BY A STORM,
ARE RELIEVED BY THE PRESENCE OF
JESUS.

JOHN vi. 14—21.

14. *Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.*

The power which the Lord had displayed, in the manner before related, convinced the persons who witnessed it that he came with divine authority. And we might have hoped that being thus convinced, they would hasten to him, and learn that which it was the business of a prophet to teach—the will of God, and his counsels as concerning themselves. But their views were bounded by things present, not raised to things above: and they see in the power of Jesus nothing beyond the means of temporal advancement or prosperity. They do not say, *This prophet* can tell us heavenly truths; but *This prophet* can exalt us to wealth and power.

It was not, however, for such a Purpose that the Prophet should come into the world.

15. *When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.*¹

16. *And when even was now come, his disciples went down unto the sea,*

17. *And entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them.*

18. *And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew.*

19. *So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship: and they were afraid.*

Matt. xiv. 22—33; Mark vi. 46—52.

20. *But he saith unto them, It is I; be not afraid.*

21. *Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.*

Had the disciples undertaken this voyage without instruction from their Master, we might have supposed that the difficulties which they encountered, *by reason of a great wind that blew*, were intended as a warning, to correct their rashness. But we learn from the other evangelists, that the voyage was undertaken at his express command. And yet they were in trouble. We are reminded, then, that God's people are not exempt from trouble, the common lot of man, even when they are employed upon their Master's business. Their privilege is, that in their trouble, they have "a very present help" which does not belong to others. On this occasion even the elements change their nature, rather than the disciples should be left comfortless. *They see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship: and they were afraid. But he saith unto them, It is I; be not afraid. Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.*

Now this may be taken in a further sense. The disciples willingly receive their Lord; and immediately their object was attained. Many things which are difficult, nay, impossible to ourselves, become easy when we are relieved by his aid and

strengthened by his strength. With him all things are possible. Sorrows are cheered, and trials lightened by his presence. But it is still more, that when he draws nigh, the soul is enabled to resist passion, to overcome sin, to gain the victory over Satan.

This is an experiment which is often tried. Multitudes have resolved to break off their evil habits; convinced that such habits are misery here, and destruction hereafter. But their better resolutions have always fallen through; they have yielded to temptation, and gone on from bad to worse. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" No: the sinner is under Satan's power: "led captive by him at his will:" corrupt nature makes him an easy prey. What then shall we do? The resource, the only resource, is to seek for one who is stronger than Satan, and profit by his assistance. And that ONE is Christ. He came into the world "to destroy the works of the devil." He himself did conquer him, and he will enable his followers to conquer him. (Luke xi. 21.) "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils."

Here then the case is like that of the disciples. *They received Jesus into the ship, and the wind ceased.* And so let the man who is under the do-

minion of sin, receive Christ into his heart, and he shall be enabled to overcome the tempests which rage within his bosom, and by which he may have been long tossed, like the troubled sea. Let the proud and haughty man commit himself to him who was "meek and lowly in heart;" his pride shall cease; he shall "be clothed with humility," and learn what it is to "esteem others better than himself." Let the impure and sensual do the same; and they shall be enabled to mortify those affections and lusts, which "war against the soul." "Sin shall have no more dominion over them." So it was with the Corinthian converts; we know what they had been: as St. Paul reminds them, "Such were some of you:" that is, they had lived in the indulgence of all those evils to which corrupt nature is inclined. "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."² Ye have received him into your heart, with whom Satan cannot dwell, and over whose disciples Satan cannot prevail. He "delivers you from the body of this death," and you are not "brought into captivity to the law of sin which is in your members."³

It may not, perhaps, be with every one, as it was with the apostles, whose ship was *immediately at the land* for which they were bound. This is not often granted. The contest may be long, and

² 1 Cor. vi. 11.

³ See Rom. vii. 22—25, and viii. 1—14.

slow, and painful. But only let the contest be continued, and the end is certain. There is no corruption which may not be overcome by a steady contemplation of the cross of Christ, and the representation which it exhibits of holiness and mercy. Take your sin to that, and crucify it there.

Those who, like the apostles, have attached themselves to Christ Jesus as their Lord, find in this history fresh reason to approve their choice. He is theirs, who has alike the will and power to protect and comfort them. He may suffer the tempest to arise, and the storm to alarm them for a while; but it is not without a purpose. He will not permit it to overwhelm or injure them. That takes place, which is beautifully described by the Psalmist: "He commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind." "Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven." ⁴

⁴ Psalm cvii. 25—30.

LECTURE XXXII.

FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST DECLARED TO
BE THE WORK REQUIRED OF GOD.

JOHN vi. 22—29.

22. *The day following, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was none other boat there, save that one whereinto his disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with his disciples into the boat, but that his disciples were gone away alone ;*

23. *(Howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks :)*

24. *When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus.*

25. *And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither ?*

26. *Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.*

27. *Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you : for him hath God the Father sealed.*

Had these persons sought Jesus, and taken even greater pains to find him, and join his company, because they perceived by his miracles that he was “come from God,” and “had the words of eternal life,” they would have done what was wise and prudent and praiseworthy. But he had reason to know, that they were more anxious about provision for the body than the soul, and that the uppermost desire in their minds was the desire of being miraculously supported by him. There was another support which he would give, which would avail when the body needed it no longer. There was another support which they would want, when nothing else could profit them. This he exhorts them to *labour*,¹ to work for, and they should not labour for it in vain. He was at hand who should give it them, and *God the Father* had set *his seal* to his power. *Him hath God the Father sealed.* We seal the deed, which we accredit as our own, and by which we mean to stand. God had set his seal to Jesus as his Son, by the Scriptures which prophesied of him, by the voice which bore testimony to him, by the supernatural works which he was daily performing. For that then which he could give, *the meat which endureth unto everlasting life*, for that they should labour.

This leads them to ask a question, which we

¹ Ἔργασθαι, the same word which is used in the succeeding verse.

might expect every man to ask who may come to years of understanding.

28. *Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?*²

29 *Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.*

A plain and obvious reply, suited to the inquirers of every age. You desire to *do the works of God*;—to fulfil that which he expects of you. This is as it should be, that the creature should perform the work assigned him by his Creator. Nor is that work doubtful. He has sent his message; he has commissioned his own Son to deliver it; and he requires you to believe him. “This is his commandment, that ye should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ.” *This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.*

As this is a sentence not belonging to the Jews alone, but to all whom the sound of the gospel reaches, it is right to stop awhile and inquire, whether we in this respect are working the works of God. Do we *believe on him whom he hath sent*?

He came to tell us, that in ourselves, and our natural condition, we are lost: lost through that sin which Adam brought upon the world, and of which he bequeathed to his posterity both the

² *The works of God*—those works which he requireth and which he alloweth.

guilt and the penalty. "For in Adam all die."
"By one man's disobedience many were made sinners."

He came to tell us, that by the blood which he shed upon the cross, the ransom which he paid there, the sacrifice he then offered,—this sin has been atoned for, this guilt may be taken away, and the sinner restored to the favour of his God. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."³

He came to tell us, that this atonement is imparted, this benefit made over to those who receive its Author for what he was sent to be: receive him in the affection and devotion of their hearts as the Redeemer by whom their souls are ransomed, are made acceptable to God, and endowed with everlasting life. As was declared in the last chapter, (v. 24,) "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."

He came to tell us, that "every man who hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure;" is "renewed in the spirit of his mind;" "mortifies his members which are upon the earth;" and gives all diligence, that he may not be idle, nor

³ Rom. v. 19; 1 Cor. xv. 22.

unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, but may “be fruitful in every good work unto all well-pleasing, being filled with the fruits of the Spirit, which are to the glory and praise of God.”

This he reveals: to the truth of this revelation God the Father hath set his seal: and to believe this, is the work which he would have us do.

To the question, then, which an awakened mind is anxiously led to ask, How shall I be reconciled to God, and live more conformably to his will?—to this question it would not be a proper reply to say, in the first place, “Do justice, love mercy;” “give alms of thy goods;” “keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips that they speak no guile.” These indeed are *the works of God*, the works which he requires: but the first thing that he requires, is, that we *believe on him whom he hath sent*: and then go forth in the spirit of that faith and in obedience to his word, to walk before him in righteousness and holiness. It is only through that faith that God will receive our works: only through that faith that we can so perform them that they shall be acceptable to him.⁴ We must first be grafted upon the right stem, and become branches of the true vine, before we can bring forth fruit

⁴ Art. xiii. “Works done before the grace of Christ, and the Inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ.”

pleasing to God through his Spirit working in us.

To this, then, look constantly and habitually, as to the foundation. See that it is securely laid. Have you a just sense of your own exceeding misery, as shown in the estrangement of the natural heart from God; and of God's exceeding mercy, as shown in the incarnation of his Son? To increase this sense, of helplessness on the one side, and of mercy on the other, is the way to "abound in the works of the Lord." No principle of holiness is so strong, as that arising from the atonement which he made for sin: no principle of charity so cogent, as "the love of Christ constraining us" to imitate his wonderful example, and to comply with the declarations of his will. "Because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them."⁵

⁵ 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

LECTURE XXXIII.

JESUS DESCRIBES HIMSELF AS THE BREAD OF LIFE; AND REVEALS THE WILL OF HIS FATHER CONCERNING THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN HIM.

JOHN vi. 30—40.

30. *They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work?*

31. *Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.*

Jesus, in what was last read, had demanded from those with whom he was discoursing, faith and allegiance; declaring that this was the work expected of them by the Father, that they should *believe on him whom he had sent*. They, in return, require a sign, a proof that he was sent of God. *What sign showest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee?* And the sign to which they refer, seems to imply that they were still looking for that temporal support which had been lately given, when the multitude was provided with food. *Our fathers did eat manna in the desert*. Moses showed this sign of his divine commission: as the Scrip-

ture relates, *he gave them bread from heaven to eat.*¹ And this affords to our Lord an occasion of explaining the spiritual purposes of his mission, and the spiritual nature of the benefit which he offered them. It was not heavenly life which was supported by the bread which Moses gave: but heavenly bread indeed was set before them now.

32. *Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.*

33. *For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.*

34. *Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.*

35. *And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.*

On a former occasion, Jesus had taken up the metaphor of water, to describe the refreshment and the spirit with which he would invigorate the soul. An allusion to the manna which supported the Israelites in the wilderness, now furnishes him with another example leading to a like purpose. He is the water of life, and he is the bread of life. Water and bread are needful to the body: and he is as water and as bread to the soul. But with this difference, that as the literal water and bread furnish but a temporary supply which is soon ex-

¹ Neh. ix. 15.

hausted, he furnishes that strength to the soul which shall never fail it in time or in eternity. *He that cometh to me shall never hunger ; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.*

But this was a benefit which must be sought, that it may be enjoyed ; and that it may be sought, must be desired. And these, as yet, had felt no such desire.

36. *But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not.*

37. *All that the Father giveth me shall come to me ; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*

38. *For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.*

39. *And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.*

40. *And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life : and I will raise him up at the last day.*

Most important, most interesting, are the truths which are here disclosed. Most comforting the assurance which is conveyed.

Those that come to Christ, and believe in him, are described, as *given to him of the Father*. This alludes to that secret preparation of the heart, which is “of the Lord :” of which we know little, except as we see its effects : when we find some so qualified and disposed, that when the “redemp-

tion that is in Christ Jesus" is set before them, they close with it and follow him, whilst others neglect or reject him. Those that receive the word with an honest and true heart, and "are ordained to eternal life,"² believe. And those who thus believe, are *given* to Christ *of the Father*: who has engaged, in his mysterious covenant, to "give him the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession."³

The preaching of St. Paul at Athens furnishes an example: and its copy may be found in every congregation or collection of persons where the gospel is proclaimed. (Acts xvii. 32.) "When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter. Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them."

Damaris, then, and Dionysius, and others with them, formed a separate class from those who either mocked at Paul's doctrine, or deferred all thoughts of it. They *came to Christ*, whom Paul was making known, whose doctrine he was preaching. And their *coming* was a proof that they were given to him of the Father. *All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.* Why the Father gave him these, and did not give him the

² Acts xiii. 48.

³ Ps. ii. 8.

whole assembly, we shall never know on this side the grave. But of this we are sure, that “the judge of all the earth shall do right, and that there is no respect of persons with him.”

And for those who have come to Christ—for those, for example, who in this Christian land, having been committed to him in baptism, have renewed in their own hearts the engagements of that covenant—how consoling is the thought, that they are objects of interest to their Father which is in heaven, who has given their souls into the charge of his beloved Son. And he, too, has added his own promise, *Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.* Has any one faith to come unto me, to believe in me, to commit his eternal salvation to my care? I will in no wise reject him, however sinful and guilty he may have been, however corrupt and frail he may still be.

So that there is nothing to deter or discourage in the idea, that those who come unto Christ, are given unto him by the Father. Does any person feel such a sense of his own weakness and unworthiness, as willingly and thankfully to accept the offer made, and appropriate to himself the ransom paid by Christ? Then he has within himself an evidence that he is one of those whom the Father hath given unto the Son. Then he has within himself a proof that it is the Father's will that he should enjoy the heavenly kingdom. For this is his will, *that every one which seeth the Son,*

and believeth in him, may have everlasting life. To see the Son, is to perceive his divine virtue and power; to recognize him, as made of God unto us “wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” And to *believe in him* is to apply that virtue and power personally to ourselves. If it be so with you: if you perceive Jesus to be indeed the Son of God, if you believe in him and rely on him for salvation, then you need go no further to inquire into the Father’s will concerning you. The faith which you profess, and are conscious of, is the token of *his will*. No other could be given, no other ought to be required. Be satisfied with this, and rejoice with thankfulness. Cherish the faith which has drawn you to the Saviour, and ascribe it to “the giver of every good and perfect gift:” but do not presumptuously search, why God hath made you to differ from another, or another from you. “Canst thou by searching find out God?” Ought we to be surprised, if at present much appears inscrutable and incomprehensible? Rather adopt the words of David: “I have not exercised myself in great matters, which are too high for me. I have refrained my soul, and kept it low. Yea my soul is as a weaned child.”⁴ Nay, one greater than David has said, “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them

⁴ Ps. cxxxi. 1, 2.

unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.”⁵

LECTURE XXXIV.

JESUS DECLARES THAT FAITH IN HIM IS GIVEN OF GOD.

JOHN vi. 41—46.

41. *The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven.*

42. *And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?*

43. *Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves.*

44. *No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.*

45. *It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.*

46. *Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father.*

⁵ Matt. xi. 25.

Instead of receiving the words of truth with due reverence, *the Jews murmured* at them. The Lord warns them not to invent objections, or listen to cavils. Such a spirit is totally inconsistent with that grace of God which bends the heart towards revealed truth. And though *no man can come unto Christ, unless the Father draw him*, there are states of mind which remove them to a greater and a greater distance from him. This, he intimates, is no new doctrine, but such as the prophets had made familiar to them. *It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.*¹

A truth is declared here, which many are very unwilling to admit; and which others pervert, as they do also other scriptures, to their own destruction.² *No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.* “The natural man receiveth not the things of God.” The heart by nature is so filled with corrupt thoughts and desires, that it cannot come and surrender itself to Christ: it will be turned away from him by envy, as in the case of his brethren; by covetousness, as in Judas; by pride, as with the Pharisees; by love of worldly things, as in the young ruler. Therefore as we read in ver. 65, *therefore said I*

¹ Is. liv. 13. “All thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children.”

² 2 Pet. iii. 16.

unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. The Spirit of God the Father must so subdue the natural disposition of the heart, and must influence it with such humble feelings and godly fear, as shall draw it towards Him who offers salvation to the meek and contrite, and opens the kingdom of heaven to those who enter it as little children. And all such *are taught of God*, have this repentance and submission from his grace.

Therefore when it afterwards happened that some of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him, it was, that they were not *drawn of the Father*. And when Peter and the rest refused to leave him, saying, Lord, to whom shall we go? it was because it was *given them of the Father*.

Were, then, those who did leave him, on this account free of blame? The Father did not draw them onward to repentance and faith. Is this laid to their charge? St. Paul has proposed the difficulty. “Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?”³

Certainly if God were as man is, and there were no difference between the nature of his power, and the nature of man’s power, we could not comprehend how this might be. If one man who has complete power over another, obliges him

³ Rom. ix. 19.

to act, or prevents his acting, that man does not act according to his own free will. Superintendence, in that case, is compulsion. But it need not be so with God. He whose wisdom is perfect and power infinite, may have means of drawing the heart, so that the person drawn may still have freedom, and the person not drawn by him shall still be without reply.

When Jesus, for example, said to Zaccheus, “Zaccheus, come down, for to day I must abide at thy house,—he came down and received him joyfully.” And this, we know, he could not have done, unless he had been *drawn by the Father*.

Now if an earthly being who had power of life and death over Zaccheus, had thus compelled him, there would be no room for choice and inclination of his own. But “with God all things are possible:” and therefore it was possible for him so to draw Zaccheus as to leave his own choice free: and so not to draw the young ruler, when he went away from Jesus sorrowing, as to leave upon his own head the guilt of his refusal. Every one who has attended to the movements of his own heart, has felt such freedom, whether in yielding to the grace of God, or in resisting it.

But we do not pretend to clear up the mysteries which are connected with the grace of God in the heart of man. “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children for

ever.”⁴ St. Paul does not argue with the gainsayer, but silences him: “Nay but, O man, who art thou, that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou formed me thus?” Neither does St. John deny that there is mystery, nor endeavour to explain it, when he distinctly says, “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.”

And is this any reason for distress or for despair? Surely, if rightly considered, it is a matter of comfort and encouragement. “I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing;” and that I can no more *come unto Christ*, and “continue in his word,”—that is, redeem my baptismal vows, and make the covenant my own,—*except the Father draw me*, than I can turn the course of the wind or of the stream. I am told this in scripture, and it agrees with my experience. But why should this affect or grieve me? I have also the promise, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally:”⁵ and I am sure that there is no unrighteousness with him,⁶ that he should refuse his Holy Spirit to those that ask him.⁷ Why should a man complain, however indigent, if he knows that there is a treasury at hand for his supply? Rather let him rejoice, that he has this help to relieve his

⁴ Deut. xxix. 29.

⁶ Rom. ix. 14.

⁵ James i. 5.

⁷ Luke xi. 13.

wants, this strength to aid his weakness. He has the support of God; this gives him confidence. He has no power of his own; this makes him humble and dependent; the proper feeling for him, his best security, in this state of danger and of trial.

LECTURE XXXV.

JESUS DECLARES HIMSELF TO BE THE BREAD OF LIFE.

JOHN vi. 47—58.

47. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.*

48. *I am that bread of life.*

49. *Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.*

50. *This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.*

51. *I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.*

Here the Lord again takes up the metaphor which he had used before, and declares him-

self to be the *bread of life*: that is, the support and nourishment of the soul. The Israelites, no doubt, had formerly been fed with manna in the wilderness: it nourished the body for a while, but there was nothing in that food which profited beyond the present life; whereas, whoso came to Christ for nourishment, should never die. He that believeth on him hath everlasting life. For he was come to *give his flesh for the life of the world*. The life of the world was forfeited; and he gave his flesh, his human nature, to death, that as many as believe in him might be restored from death to life. All were dead, and he died for all.

This, however, was a mystery which at present they could not comprehend. He “told them before,” that when it should be accomplished, they “might remember that he told them of it.” He left the writing, that when the light was thrown upon it, it might be seen, and read, and explained. All as yet was dark and mysterious.

52. *The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?*

53. *Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.*

54. *Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.*

55. *For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.*

56. *He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.*

57. *As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.*

58. *This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.*

The discourse had begun upon the subject of the manna. This the Israelites during their sojourn in the wilderness collected daily, and lived upon it as their food. What the manna was to them, such must the body and blood of Christ be to those who believe in him. It must be inwardly received as their daily food, their constant support. *For his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed.* The doctrine of his body broken, and his blood shed for man, admitted into the mind and digested there, is mixed up with all the thoughts, and animates all the motions of the heart. It becomes part of that by which man's spirit is preserved. It furnishes the same support to the weak and labouring soul, which ordinary food supplies to the frail and exhausted body.

For example, (1 Kings xix.) we read of Elijah, that worn out by his journey, when flying from the revenge of Jezebel, he lay down in the wilderness, and "requested for himself that he might die." But the angel of the Lord came once and again, and touched him, and said, "Arise and eat; be-

cause the journey is too great for thee." And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that bread forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God.

And this is but a specimen of the way in which the Christian's strength is recruited when he feeds upon the body and blood of Christ. A sense of sin lies heavy upon his soul: he feels himself condemned and guilty before God, and labours under a burthen which is "grievous and intolerable." But he finds refreshment in the body of Christ, bruised for his offences: he has a cordial in the blood of Christ, which was shed upon the cross for those very transgressions which weigh him down. He drinks in the thought, that this blood was poured out for sin as a sacrifice which God had engaged to accept; and in this knowledge he is comforted.

Again, if the Christian, like Elijah, feels the journey of life "too great" for him, harassed by the corruptions of the flesh, and the snares of the world, and the wiles of the devil: he is strengthened and supported by remembering that the Son of God was clothed in that same flesh and suffered in that same flesh for him, though "without sin:" and that having been "tempted in all points like as we are, he is able to succour them that are tempted." This enables him to rise, and go upon the strength of this consoling truth, and sustain his journey "towards the mount of

God." *He that eateth me, even he shall live by me.*

In this way, Christ crucified for him, Christ strengthening and supporting him, is so received into his heart, that Christ *dwells in him, and he in Christ*, Christ is one with him, as he with Christ, and as Christ with the Father. *This is that bread which came down from heaven*: not as the forefathers of these Jews did eat manna, and were dead: *he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever*. This spiritual food shall be a source of strength within him, supporting him to everlasting life. It gives him vigour for the appointed time of his earthly journey:—it feeds him when earthly food can no longer sustain his body, in the hour of sickness and of death:—it will be life to the disembodied spirit when it leaves its earthly tenement: it will be life to that body which shall be raised incorruptible at the last day.

No wonder then, that Christ has called himself the *Bread of life*: no wonder, that he should have ordained a remembrance of himself, which commands us to take and eat of his body which was given for us, and to drink of his blood which was shed for the remission of our sins. No wonder that he has said, *Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you*. As the body, if in a healthy state, takes delight in its salutary food: so if the soul is really quickened into life by the Holy Spirit, it will de-

light in the blood of Christ, and feed upon the remembrance of his death. It will seek its habitual support from this, and from nothing else. Whoever looks to any wisdom but that of Christ to guide him, to any righteousness but that of Christ to justify him, to any strength but that of Christ to sustain him in life, in death, or in eternity—of him it may be justly said, in the prophet's language, "He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside."¹ But he that feedeth on Christ, and makes his incarnation, his crucifixion, his resurrection, his ascension, and his intercession the daily nourishment of his soul, *even he shall live by him*: and prove it to be faithfully and truly promised, *He that eateth of this bread shall live for ever*.

LECTURE XXXVI.

MANY OF THE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS SEPARATE THEMSELVES FROM HIM AND THE APOSTLES.

JOHN vi. 59—71.

59. *These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum.*

¹ Is. xlv. 20.

60. *Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying ; who can hear it ?*

61. *When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you ?*

62. *What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before ?*

63. *It is the spirit that quickeneth ; the flesh profiteth nothing : the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.*

64. *But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.*

65. *And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.*

66. *From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.*

We cannot deny that of the things which Jesus had said, there were some which must have been, at present, *hard sayings*. It could not yet be comprehended, how the mystery of his incarnation is food to the believing soul ; how his blood shed upon the cross is as a cordial to the penitent heart, or how faith can produce such an union between the redeemed and the Redeemer, that he dwelleth in them, and they in him. The whole mystery of godliness must be developed, before this could be rightly conceived or fully imbibed :

and the Spirit must descend, and give life to the words which spake of these secret things.

Were, then, those disciples justified, who *from that time went back, and walked no more with him*? Surely not. They had seen what might have taught them to trust in him. They should have continued to attend to his instruction, and listen to his warnings; and might have assumed that what they knew not then, they should come to know hereafter.

Indeed it commonly happens that the doctrines of the gospel are gradually comprehended: open by degrees upon the soul, as the rising sun when it disperses the shades and mists of night, and discovers first one distant and obscure object, and then another, till the whole prospect is made clear. Is then a man at liberty to turn his back upon these doctrines, because he cannot at first perceive their truth and excellence? Should he not rather study, inquire, examine: compare together the different parts of Scripture, and observe how all lead to one point, and form one great argument? And when he has done this, the eyes of his understanding being enlightened, he will learn to comprehend those things which might once appear *hard sayings*: he will learn to feed on the mercy of the incarnation, to seek nourishment in the precepts of the gospel, and to find, in the blood of the cross, refreshment to his soul. He will understand that HE is justly termed the bread of life, who

gives the soul a new existence, and enables it to breathe a purer air, and to have its conversation in heaven.

This was the case with the apostles themselves. At the time, they did not comprehend the full scope of the words spoken, any more than those who left the Lord's company, *and walked no more with him*. It was the work of the Spirit afterwards to impart the purpose of his coming in the flesh, and explain the real nature of his kingdom. But this they had seen, that the power which he exercised must be the power of God. They had heard too with astonishment the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth: his spiritual precepts approved themselves to their hearts. They felt that to be "poor in spirit" is suitable to man; that holiness must be needful for those who would "see God;" that meekness, and mercy, and charity, and moderation, are excellent virtues, and he who inculcated them, worthy of being listened to:—this their reason perceived, though they might not yet perceive how they might attain these qualities through dependence on him who recommended and prescribed them. But what they did know and understand, made them desire to know more; what they did believe, inclined them to believe more; Jesus taught them "as one who had authority;" and therefore they adhered to him, even though many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

67. *Then Jesus said unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?*

68. *Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.*

69. *And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.*

70. *Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?*

71. *He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve.*

It is possible therefore to hear the words of eternal life, and be constantly under their sound, and yet remain unmoved or unconverted by them. How needful to take heed, "lest the heart be hardened," as that of Judas, "through the deceitfulness of sin."

The use to be made of this, and every other instance of hypocrisy or apostasy, of going away from Christ, or walking unworthily of his faith,—is to show us our own weakness and danger. We, like the apostles, say by our profession, that *we believe and are sure that he is that Christ, the Son of the living God*. And yet, how prone are we to go away from him? While he was on earth, to come to him, was to join his party, to attend his personal instructions; and to go away, was to walk no more with him. Now that he is in heaven, to come to him is a movement of the heart, and to remain his disciples, is to take his precepts

as the rule of our life and conversation. So that those may be justly said to go away from Christ, who in their practice disavow their baptismal obligations ; who neglect what he has taught, and expect eternal life on other terms than those which the gospel lays down. And of these, alas ! how great the number ! How lamentably is the prediction verified, “ Many are called, but few chosen ! ”

Yet at that time when *many went back and walked no more with him*, there were others who, notwithstanding that evil example, and other sore temptations, still adhered to him as *the Christ, the Son of the living God*. It is the same still. And we are as much obliged to choose between those who go away, and those who remain stedfast in the faith, as they were. May God incline us to choose aright !

For well is it said, *To whom shall we go ?* To whom instead of him, who spoke that which he knew, and testified that which he had seen ? To whom instead of him, whom God the Father hath sealed, that he might give eternal life to as many as believe in him ? To whom instead of him, who bore our sins in his own body, that he might bring us to God ? To whom instead of him, whom God hath made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption ? *Will ye also go away ?* Let us reply in the conviction of our heart, and affirm it by the devotion of our lives,

Lord to whom shall we go ? thou hast the words of eternal life.

LECTURE XXXVII.

A DISCOURSE BETWEEN JESUS AND HIS BRETHREN.

JOHN vii. 1—8.

1. *After these things Jesus walked in Galilee : for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews had sought to kill him.*

2. *Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand.*¹

3. *His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest.*

4. *For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world.*

5. *For neither did his brethren believe in him.*

¹ ἡ σκηνοπηγία. Lev. xxiii. 33—43. “And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the Lord. Ye shall dwell in booths seven days ; that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt : I am the Lord your God.”

We find *the brethren of Jesus* afterwards, (Acts i. 14,) together with Mary, and the faithful women who accompanied him, so occupied, and so described, as shows them to have been then believers in him.² But at present, their language is only that of suspicion and jealousy. “For Jesus himself testified, that a prophet hath no honour in his own country.”³ As a general remark, we can easily understand this. Prophets are men, and have the weaknesses of men. Their errors are most clearly seen by those amongst whom they live: and the force of the message is often lessened by the imperfections of the messenger. This is not reasonable; but it belongs to human nature. Jesus, however, had not the weakness of a man. But a similar feeling made his brethren the last to believe in one who had been brought up and lived among themselves.

Nor can we be surprised at their saying as they did: *If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world.* They were ignorant of the settled plan of his ministry, and the determinate counsel which governed it all.

6. *Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is always ready.*

² “These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.”

³ See chap. iv. 44.

7. *The world cannot hate you ; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.*

8. *Go ye up unto this feast : I go not up yet unto this feast ; for my time is not yet full come.*

The great cause of enmity against Jesus is here declared. He brought the men of that time to a test which they could not stand : he showed to *the world*, to the great mass of the people, that their principles and their practice laid them under condemnation : and they, instead of reforming themselves, assailed their teacher. *The world cannot hate you ;* has no reason of enmity against you, for ye agree with it ; *but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.* Had he favoured the pride and haughtiness of the chief priests or Pharisees, had he allowed the spirit of the law to remain neglected, and its precepts to be glossed over till they became of no avail, he might have taught in safety ; he might have been followed and applauded. But one who pronounced his blessing upon the meek and humble, could not be approved by the proud and self-righteous ; one who required purity, must be disliked by the sensual ; one who condemned hypocrisy, must be dreaded by the hypocrite. It was impossible that those who had all their affections set on things below, should delight in him who taught them to lay up treasure in heaven.

This both explains and confirms the truth which our Lord declared in a former conversation. “ No

man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." Unless the Spirit direct the heart towards things above; unless that which naturally loves and desires present things, be converted towards heaven; unless that which is opposed to a pure and holy law be drawn towards God and his will; the gospel of Christ will be hated and avoided. That which is after the flesh will detest that which is after the Spirit. The preacher of "righteousness, and temperance, and judgment to come," will have the same treatment as Micaiah; of whom Ahab confessed, "I hate him, because he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil."

Let all ask themselves, whether they have never experienced any thing of the like kind; whether they have never found their hearts rising against a doctrine or a precept which struck close home to themselves, not because the doctrine or the precept were otherwise than scriptural, but because it opposed their habits and inclinations.

The case is altered at once as soon as the heart is awakened to that great truth: "What shall it profit a man, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Then it desires, not what is agreeable, but what is true; not what flatters, but what profits; what can be rested on for eternity. St. Paul asks the Galatians,⁴ "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the

⁴ Gal. iv 16.

truth?" If they were steadily looking to maintain peace with God, and to secure eternal life, he would have appeared their greatest friend, when he endeavoured to turn them away from error, that "the labour" which he had bestowed upon them "might not be in vain." Let a man be once in earnest, and anxious to secure his life, rather than to be spared a present pain or privation; and then he will be the favourite physician, who is the truest; not he who gives the softest answer, but he who prescribes the surest rules. Then too, when the heart is under the influence of the Spirit, meekness and humility will prevail there: a man will have too strong a sense of his infirmity and corruption, to be surprised at reproof or offended by censure.

Whom then does our Lord intend and describe, when he says to his brethren, *The world cannot hate you?* He means the same world of which he speaks afterwards as being distinguished and separated from his disciples, saying, that they "are not of it, or the world would love its own:" and that the world cannot receive the Holy Spirit, because "it seeth him not, neither knoweth him." He means "the children of this generation;" those who "have their portion in this world;" who have not been "renewed in the spirit of their minds," so as to "seek first the kingdom of God." A marked distinction is made in scripture between these and the faithful followers of Christ: but the

proportion which each class bears to the other, will vary in different times and situations. In all times and in all places it will be true of them, that they will be adversaries of the gospel, more or less openly, and in a greater or less degree: and for the same reason, that it *testifies concerning them that their deeds are evil.*

The duty, then, of every faithful teacher and every faithful disciple of the gospel, is, not to seek “the friendship of the world:” remembering how it is written, “whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God:”⁵—but to labour “in season and out of season,” to make the world their friends: to bring over to the service of God those who are now engaged in the service of Mammon. The apostle has left the rule: “The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.”⁶

⁵ James iv. 4.

⁶ 2 Tim. ii. 24—26.

LECTURE XXXVIII.

JESUS GOING UP TO JERUSALEM, REASONS
WITH THE JEWS.

JOHN vii. 9—18.

9. *When he had said these words unto them, he abode still in Galilee.*

10. *But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret.*

11. *Then the Jews sought him at the feast, and said, Where is he?*

12. *And there was much murmuring among the people concerning him: for some said, He is a good man: others said, Nay; but he deceiveth the people.*

13. *Howbeit no man spake openly of him for fear of the Jews.*

The reports concerning Jesus had by this time become generally spread. So that on a public occasion like that of the feast now kept, there was an expectation about him. *Where is he?* The opinions, too, which prevailed, were just as might be supposed, according to the candour or the jealousy, the good or the bad disposition of those who spoke of him. Some called him a deceiver; while

others justly argued of the tree from its fruits, and could not believe that a deceiver should work deeds of mercy, or utter words of wisdom. But no man dared openly to avow himself on his side or speak in his favour. 'The powers which ruled at Jerusalem were against him. Satan was yet upon his throne, and would not readily give way.

14. *Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught.*¹

15. *And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?*

16. *Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.*

17. *If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.*

18. *He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory : but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.*

We have here an example of the manner in which our Lord disclosed his divine mission. *He went up into the temple, and taught.* He taught "as one having authority:" and the people were "astonished at his doctrine." Whence is this wisdom? they asked: it proceeds from no ordinary source: it has been learned from no human teachers. *Jesus answered and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.* It is not that

¹ He had before said, *I go not up yet unto this feast ; for my time is not yet full come.*

which I have derived from men, or which belongs to this world : it is not, like the doctrines of human philosophy, wrought out by the natural understanding : in that sense the doctrine which I teach *is not mine* : it conveys the will of Him that sent me : it is a gracious message that bringeth salvation, and offers eternal life as the gift of God, through Jesus Christ.

Should any complain, that this were hard to believe? There shall be proof of its truth, satisfactory and sufficient to every honest, meek, and simple heart. *If any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine* that it comes from God. When the seed falls on “good ground,” on the “honest and good heart,” that honest and good heart shall be led on till it sees and understands the wisdom of God in the revelation of his Son.

This is a great promise ; and assists in explaining what was declared in the preceding chapter : “All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me.” We are here informed who those are, to whom it is given of the Father to come unto Christ Jesus for salvation. They who are minded to do the will of God.² Sometimes, indeed, in the history of those who have been brought to repentance and the knowledge of the truth, the prophet’s words have been fulfilled : “I am sought of them that asked not for me ; I am found of them that sought me

² ΕΙ ΤΙΣ ΘΕΛΕΙ ΠΟΙΕΙΝ.

not.”³ The goodness of God has no limits that we can discover. But though “he giveth not account of any of his matters,” and “will have mercy on whom he will have mercy;”⁴ we have here a sure promise that no man shall ever be passed over by that mercy who is willing to do his will. He may be feeble, but he shall become strong; he may be weak and wavering, but his faith shall be more and more confirmed; he may be simple and ignorant, but he shall be made “wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” They, who like the Bereans, “search the scriptures daily, whether those things are so,” shall, like the same Bereans, see reason to believe.⁵

We may trace an example of this, in the well-known case of Cornelius. (Acts x.) God saw fit to disclose to the apostle Peter, that he had “granted unto the Gentiles repentance unto life:” and explained to him, what his Jewish prejudices made him so slow to believe, that the partition wall was now thrown down which had hitherto separated the Israelite from the Gentile. So he made it evident to Peter that he had revealed himself in a vision to a man who was of a heathen nation, an officer in the Roman army, then stationed in Judea. But the person chosen for this purpose, the man to whom this vision was granted,

³ Is. lxx. i.⁴ Job. xxxiii. 13. Rom. ix. 15.⁵ Acts xvii. 11, 12.

was one whom divine grace had already disposed to profit by the privileges which he enjoyed, when placed in the country of Judea, among a people who knew and worshipped the Creator. We read, (ver. 2—5,) that Cornelius “was a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway. He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius, thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter : he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do ; (xi. 14 ;) he shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.”

Here that was done by a special vision, which is commonly brought to pass through the secret agency of the Spirit. Cornelius was one whose heart was set upon doing the will of God : and he experienced the truth of the prophetic promise, “Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord : his going forth is prepared as the morning ; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.”⁶ He was especially selected to know, and to make manifest to others, “the mystery which had been hid from ages and generations ;” that “now in Christ Jesus they who sometime were far off, were made nigh

⁶ Hosea vi. 3.

by the blood of Christ.”⁷ He was taught *to know of the doctrine of Christ*, that it was *of God*, and that “he is the Saviour of all that believe.”

Thus it is ordained, that “to him who hath, shall be given,” that “every one that seeketh, findeth,” and that “to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.” We do not pretend to search out the ways of God, or to limit the exercise of his grace: but “the things that are revealed belong unto us and our children for ever:” namely, that “his mercy is on them that fear him, throughout all generations.”

LECTURE XXXIX.

JESUS CONTINUES HIS DISCOURSE WITH
THE JEWS, AND SHOWS THAT THEY
HAVE NO KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

JOHN vii. 19—30.

19. *Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me?*

The Jews were attached to Moses, and made their boast of his law. And yet how little did

⁷ Eph. ii. 13.

they observe it ! How was its spirit violated ? Nay, even the letter of it ; for they were already taking counsel together to put him to death. This he knew, to whom all things were known : though it appeared strange to those with whom he was discoursing.

20. *The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil : who goeth about to kill thee ?*

21. *Jesus answered and said unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel.*

22. *Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision ; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers ;)¹ and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man.*

23. *If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken ; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day ?*

24. *Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.*

The Jews still remembered against Jesus the miracle which he had performed, probably a year and a half before, at Beth^{es}saida : when he healed the paralytic man on the sabbath day. He had defended himself at other times by reference to their own practice, of tending their cattle on the sabbath. He here defends himself by the law of Moses in which they trusted. To keep that law, which required that circumcision should take place

¹ Before it was made part of the law of Moses, it was ordained to Abraham as a seal of the covenant.

on the eighth day from the birth, they were in the habit of infringing upon the repose of the sabbath. And should not he be allowed in a far less degree to infringe upon that repose, in order to restore health to the diseased body? But prejudice listens to no reason. Therefore he warns them not to judge hastily, but to *judge righteous judgment*.

25. *Then said some of them of Jerusalem, Is not this he, whom they seek to kill?*

26. *But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ?*

27. *Howbeit we know this man whence he is: but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is.²*

28. *Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught, saying, Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am: and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not.*

29. *But I know him: for I am from him, and he hath sent me.*

30. *Then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come.*

The cavil of some of the Jews here, pretending that they knew of Jesus *whence he was*, furnishes opportunity for declaring a solemn truth, which might strike conviction to their hearts. *He that*

² This seems to have prevailed as a traditional notion among the Jews, derived, probably, from one of the prophecies: as "Who shall declare his generation?" or, "Whose goings forth have been of old."

sent me is true, whom ye know not. And yet God was acknowledged by them, as the Creator; as the deliverer of their nation; as the author of their law; his word was read in their synagogues; and sacrifice was daily offered to him in the temple. Yet they *knew him not.*

To know God, therefore, is something more than to confess the Scriptures to be his word, or to pay him ceremonial worship. Nay, it is something more than to be acquainted with his attributes, and to acknowledge his power, his justice, his mercy, his wisdom. It is so to bring these attributes of God before the mind, as to act upon them; to let them operate upon our affections, and influence our ways and doings. To know God in a scriptural sense, is to have that acquaintance with him which makes him the object of our reverence, and love, and obedience. It was knowledge of God in the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that they made all their undertakings, all their journies, all their enterprises begin with God; invoking his aid, and depending upon his blessing. It was knowledge of God in Joseph, when the thoughts of what he owed to God repressed the motions of sin, and restrained him from entering into temptation. It was knowledge of God in Eli, when he acquiesced in the divine will, though exercised against himself, and submitted to the hand of the Lord. The Psalms are full of the knowledge of God. There we find

David, sometimes declaring his majesty and the excellence of his power ; sometimes magnifying his goodness and mercy ; sometimes bending before him in contrition, sometimes breaking forth in strains of joy and thanksgiving, and always depending upon him for increase of grace, and strength, and spiritual good. It was knowledge of God to say, “ When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained ; what is man, that thou art mindful of him ? and the son of man, that thou visitest him ? ”³ It was knowledge of God to say, “ The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul : the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart : the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.”⁴

Such-like acquaintance with God, and his will does not appear in the discourses of the Jews recorded here. They had lost the true understanding of his nature. What ignorance of God, to choose a place of concourse for a display of prayer ; to wear the outward appearance of fasting by a sad countenance ; to give alms to be seen of men ! What ignorance of God to complain that a man was made whole on the sabbath day ; to be jealous when a sinner was instructed in the ways of righteousness ! So that although they made their boast of God, as the God of their father Abraham ; though

³ Psalm viii. 3, 4.⁴ Psalm xix. 7, 8.

they professed his worship, and “swore by his name;” it might be truly said, *they knew him not*. To any purpose of filial love or duty, they knew him not. Their knowledge of him had no influence upon their hearts or lives.

The Lord proceeds to say, *But I know him : for I am from him, and he hath sent me*. And thus he has instructed and enabled us to know God, in a still more endearing character than that in which he was revealed to the Jews. To them he was revealed as the author of their law, the preserver of their nation. To us he is revealed as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent to bless us, by bringing us to himself. This teaches us to know him with that acquaintance which goes nearest to the heart, as having displayed towards us the highest exercise of love. But it is acquaintance which only his Spirit can infuse. He must “shine in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”⁵ It is a knowledge which must be “spiritually discerned.” May it be granted us more and more fully, till the words of the prophet are accomplished, saying, “I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people;—for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord.”⁶

⁵ 2 Cor. iv. 6.

⁶ Jer. xxxi. 33.

LECTURE XL.

JESUS CONTINUES TO DISCOURSE WITH
THE JEWS AT JERUSALEM.

JOHN vii. 31—39.

31. *And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done ?*

32. *The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning him ; and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take him.*

33. *Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me.*

34. *Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me : and where I am, thither ye cannot come.*

35. *Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will he go, that we shall not find him ? will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles ?¹*

36. *What manner of saying is this that he said, Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me : and where I am, thither ye cannot come ?*

¹ Since the Jews and the inhabitants of Judea will not receive him as the Messiah, will he go among the Gentiles for followers ?

So little were they prepared to carry their views beyond the present world, or to understand, that now was “the accepted time, now the day of salvation.” The foolish virgins, in the parable, found that they might ask too late, and therefore ask in vain, “Lord, open unto us.” Now at this present time, and here in this present world, is the offer made,—“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden.” Now is the promise given, “Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.” But now also must the offer be accepted and the promise claimed. Now we must strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many hereafter, like the Jews who are here warned, “shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able;” and find too late, that where Christ and his disciples are, *they cannot come.*

37. *In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.*

38. *He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.²*

39. *(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given;³ because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)*

² Not in any particular passage, but in many prophetic passages; as Prov. i. 23; Is. xlv. 3; Zech. xii. 10; Joel. ii. 28.

³ Not given to the apostles in the manner which was intended, and fulfilled at the day of Pentecost. Compare xiv. 26, and xvi. 7.

This is one of the many occasions when the Lord took opportunity from the circumstances around him to give force and illustration to the truths which he declared. It had become customary at the feast of tabernacles to draw water from the fountain of Siloam, and with much pomp of ceremony, and with music, and with hymns of thanksgiving, to pour it upon the altar at the offering of the morning sacrifice.⁴ Our Lord witnessed these proceedings; saw the interest which they excited, and the little effect, probably, which they produced upon the heart: and he was led to say, What is the water of Siloam? *If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.* “Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters” which have real value, which are waters of life and health. *He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.* He that believeth on me drinketh from “the well of salvation:” and shall himself become a fountain, from which streams of refreshing truth shall flow: shall himself diffuse that fertility around, which rivers of living water give wherever they extend. As the Scripture hath said, He “shall be like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.”⁵ As the Scripture hath said, “I will pour out my Spirit upon him, I will make known my words

⁴ The origin and purport of this custom has not been preserved; and it had no authority from the law.

⁵ Is. lviii. 11.

unto him.”⁶ “I will pour water upon him that is thirsty: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring.”⁷

We are not in this case left to doubt concerning the interpretation. *This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe in him should receive.*

Such was the promise of those more abundant gifts of the Spirit, which were offered under the gospel dispensation. And if we look from the promise to its fulfilment, we shall see the justness of the comparison.

If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. The apostles had been brought to feel that salutary thirst. It had led them to Christ Jesus, and retained them in his faith. They had drunk of his words; they had received his doctrine; they were in due time filled with his Spirit; and when they went forth to obey his command and execute their commission, truths flowed from them which were as a living spring of water to mankind, as “floods upon a dry ground.” Before his Holy Spirit was shed upon them, they were themselves as “a dry ground where no water is:” parched and barren in their own hearts, and affording little benefit to others. But when “they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, they spake the word of God with boldness.”⁸ The waters of salvation

⁶ Prov. i. 23.

⁷ Is. xliv. 3.

⁸ Acts iv. 31.

flowed freely from their mouths: and “daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.”⁹ And those again, who had learnt from them, when they were scattered abroad, and permitted to remain no longer at Jerusalem, “went every where preaching the word.”¹ And that word which they preached, had the effect which water has upon the sinking frame or upon the barren ground. It comforted the drooping heart, and “revived the spirit of the contrite ones.” It made “the wilderness blossom as a rose,” and “be like a watered garden.” The heathen, hitherto barren and unprofitable, became abundant in the fruits of righteousness. Instead of the works of the flesh, the fruits of the Spirit appeared: “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.”²

And such will always be the effect of the Spirit which they who believe in Jesus shall receive. It shall be in themselves a well of water, “springing up into everlasting life.” And it shall not be confined within themselves, but run over and communicate its blessings. As the influence of evil is unhappily diffusive, so, no less, is the influence of good: and the running stream does not more surely indicate its progress by the fertility which adorns its banks, than the zealous Christian sheds around him the effects of that Spirit by

⁹ Acts v. 42.¹ Acts viii. 4.² Gal. v. 22.

which his heart is filled, and his practice animated. He illustrates the Lord's assurance. *Rivers of living water* flow to others, out of the abundance of his own heart, out of the fulness which the Lord gives: and which shows, that not to the apostles only, but to the men of every age, He is a fountain of life, from which refreshment, and strength, and salvation, are continually supplied to every one that believeth.

LECTURE XLI.

THE DIFFERENT OPINIONS OF THE PEOPLE CONCERNING JESUS. THE PHARISEES ARE DISAPPOINTED IN THEIR ATTEMPT TO TAKE HIM.

JOHN vii. 40—53.

40. *Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet.*

41. *Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee?*

42. *Hath not the Scripture said, That Christ cometh*

of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?

43. *So there was a division among the people because of him.*

44. *And some of them would have taken him; but no man laid hands on him.*

No prophecy seems to have been more generally in the minds of the people, than that of Micah,¹ declaring that the Messiah should be born at Bethlehem. When "the wise men" came as strangers to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is he that is born king of the Jews?" the answer was immediately returned, Christ should be born "in Bethlehem of Judæa; for thus it is written by the prophet."² Jesus, however, was brought up not at Bethlehem, but in Galilee. This was enough to satisfy his thoughtless enemies: *Shall Christ come out of Galilee?* Had they sought further, and inquired, we know they would have found the prophecy most literally fulfilled: and fulfilled by a series of means which showed that the providence of Him by whom the prophet spake was immediately exercised. Jesus did come *of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem.*

It has pleased God to send a light into the world. A veil is sometimes drawn before it; not that the light may be hidden from any, but that occasion may be given to see whether there is the will to draw that veil aside, and discover truth

¹ Chap. v. 2.

² Matt. ii. 2—5.

beyond. But the truth, they who “are not of the truth” do not desire to find : others search for it, and are satisfied.

45. *Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees ; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him ?*

46. *The officers answered, Never man spake like this man.*

47. *Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived ?*

48. *Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him ?*

49. *But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed.*

The officers who had been sent to apprehend Jesus, here give a striking testimony to his character and dignity. They were not, we may suppose, prejudiced in his favour, or inclined to admire him. Yet they return abashed and confounded, and acknowledge, *Never man spake like this man.* Like the conviction of the Centurion who superintended the crucifixion : “Truly this was the Son of God.”

There are not wanting in our own country many who allow the same. *Never man spake like this man.* Without controversy, they will confess, there are no such benevolent precepts, no such wise laws, as those of the gospel. It would be a happier world, if all conformed to them. But like

the officers, they approve and admire, and no more. They do not take the Author of this wisdom and goodness for their Lord and their God. And yet it might be justly said, If I have spoken evil, show where the evil is; but if well, why do ye not obey me?

Here, indeed, a reason is alleged: *Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?* It was to be taken for granted, that the rulers and the Pharisees were the best judges whether he was to be believed or not.

And in human life this is a constant source of error. People set up others as standards for themselves, and make them their guides. Were the rulers or the Pharisees really better able to decide whether Jesus was the Christ, than the plain men who were astonished at his doctrine? They could not judge better, whether his works proved that "God was with him." They could not judge better whether *he spake as never man spake*. The real question was, Were they witnesses equally disinterested? Had they no reason for denying him? Would their own authority have been lessened, if he had been received? Would their own ways of living be condemned, if he were followed? Therefore, the people whom they despised, as *knowing not the law*, and who in many cases received him gladly, were more to be trusted than the rulers or the Pharisees. The things which were hidden

from “the wise and prudent,” were “revealed unto babes,” who had less to hinder them from receiving the kingdom of God as little children. Throughout the whole dispensation of the gospel, we have constant occasion to see, that “God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.”³ To “the wise, to the scribe, to the disputer of this world,” God does not look. But “to this man will I look, saith the Lord: even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.”⁴

50. *Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,)*

51. *Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?*

52. *They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.*

53. *And every man went unto his own house.*

In the treatment which Nicodemus received from his brethren the Pharisees, we have a living example of the conduct arising from a worldly, party spirit. He ventures to require that Jesus should be dealt with like any other suspected person, according to law and reason. *Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?*⁵ But the very thought exasperates them.

³ 1 Cor. i. 27.

⁴ Isa. lxvi. 2.

⁵ Deut. i. 17; xvii. 8—11.

Art thou also of Galilee? Dost thou take part with the person whom we are determined to condemn?

Therefore we are warned to “love not the world:” not to make its opinion our rule, or its favour our object. A man’s party, the company to which he belongs and with which he associates, is a portion of “the world:” and often that portion by which he is most endangered. They are the first whom he must abandon, if he perceives that their course is wrong: and therefore they are the first to oppose him with those taunts and sneers which are so difficult to bear. Many are they who “receive the word with joy: but anon, when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by they are offended.”

It is only by the habitual prevalence of FAITH that this danger can be overcome. “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” It discovers the real worthlessness of that favour which is “not of the Father, but of the world.” The time is at hand, when the good will or the ill will, the applause or the contradiction, the smile or the frown, of a party or a company, will signify no more to us, than the wind, whether it be rough or smooth, which blows over our grave. But we know what *will* then profit and avail. He who is owned of Christ; whom the Redeemer is not ashamed of; who is saluted as a “good and faithful servant,”—he will not

regret that he braved the term of Galilean or Nazarene :—or any other of those terms, by which, in all ages, those who “are not of the world,” have been distinguished by the “children of this generation.” And at that final season it will be remembered in behalf of Nicodemus, that he displeased his party for the sake of Christ, and stood up in defence of him whom others rejected and despised. His conduct in this case, comes under the description of that to which a blessed promise is given: “He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward.”⁶ “Whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.”⁷

LECTURE XLII.

CASE OF A WOMAN TAKEN IN ADULTERY.

JOHN viii. 1—11.

1. *Jesus went unto the mount of Olives.*
2. *And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him ; and he sat down, and taught them.*

⁶ Matt. x. 41.

⁷ Mark ix. 41.

3. *And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery ; and when they had set her in the midst,*

4. *They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.*

5. *Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned : but what sayest thou ?*

6. *This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.*

7. *So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.*

8. *And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground.*

There are many different reasons by which the scribes and Pharisees might have been instigated in prosecuting this guilty person. They might be affected by a zeal for the divine law and the majesty of God, by a desire that such an offence against it might not go unpunished. Or they might feel that adultery was a crime most injurious to human society, and deem it right to visit such transgressors severely, that others might be deterred by the example. Such was the commandment of the law: (Lev. xx. 10 :) “The adulterer and adulteress shall surely be put to death.”¹

¹ The mode of punishment is not there pointed out : but in a similar case, (Deut. xxii. 21,) death by stoning is specified.

Motives such as these would have been laudable. It is the will of God, (as is seen Levit. xix. 17,) that wickedness be restrained. "Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him."

But the Lord knew that these motives had no place in the mind of those who brought the woman before him on this occasion. Their object was "to entangle him in his talk." They spoke, *tempting him, that they might have to accuse him.* So he evaded their question, and *said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.* As the law provided, (Deut. xvii. 7,) "The hands of the witnesses," (of those who alleged and proved the crime,) "shall be first upon the convicted criminal to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So thou shalt put the evil away from among you."

The answer was an answer of divine wisdom, suited to this particular case, and intended to confound the devices of the adversaries. We must not suppose it to imply that crimes are to escape punishment, because those whose duty or office it is to sit in judgment upon them are in their own characters partakers of corruption. Else, (as St. Paul says on another subject,) "else must we needs go out of the world," if only he who was without sin might condemn sin in others.

At the same time we may collect here, that there is a way of looking upon crime which shows

an unsanctified spirit, and is displeasing to Him who reads the heart. It is the same spirit as the Pharisees betrayed on other occasions, when they upbraided the Lord, because he joined the company of publicans and sinners. A humble mind, in which the Holy Spirit dwells, is grieved at sin. It "rejoiceth not in iniquity," but "hopeth all things." It joins in that pathetic sentiment of David, "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law."² It perceives in the corruption of others that corruption of which all partake, and which has alienated man from a pure and holy God. It perceives that if in any thing *we* have been made to differ, that difference must be ascribed to the mercy of God which has kept us from temptation, or to his grace which has enabled us to resist it.

Jesus knew that such was not the mind of those who now came forward as the accusers of this woman. So he directed his arrow to their consciences. This woman is indeed a sinner; but what are you that you should exult over her? Whilst you justly condemn her, be mindful of what you yourselves deserve. *He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.*

9. *And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.*

² Psalm cxix. 136.

10. *When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?*

11. *She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.*

Jesus uniformly refused to take upon himself the office of a judge. When one among a company invited him to interfere with his brother who had defrauded him of his inheritance, he declined to enter into the case; but dismissed it, saying, “Who made me a judge or a divider over you?”³ And then he proceeded to use the example as a warning against covetousness. And so now in regard to this woman, when none had dared to execute the sentence of the law against her, neither would he. *Neither do I condemn thee:* that is, inflict the punishment which thy crime has incurred. “For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.”⁴ *Go, and sin no more.*

This is a specimen of that mercy, which willeth not “that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” The disgrace which this woman had suffered, the danger in which she had stood, made the present season a favourable time for warning. The temporal consequences of sin do not in themselves create godly sorrow. But they often lead to godly sorrow; they prepare the soil

³ Luke xii. 14.

⁴ John iii. 17.

for receiving the good seed of the word. And therefore this woman is dismissed with a caution not to tempt God further, lest her "last state be worse than her first:" but to "seek the Lord while he may be found:" to return unto him, that he might "abundantly pardon."

For this, we would observe, is the object of all God's mercy and forbearance. It is exercised, that men may not perish, but have everlasting life. And that they may have everlasting life, he calls them to repentance and the knowledge of the truth. The great purpose of the gospel, in which "the grace of God which bringeth salvation appeared unto all men," is, that "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, they should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." And this, which was the purpose of the grand scheme of man's redemption, is also the purpose of every individual case of pardon, that they who have received mercy, should sin no more, but "let their light shine before men," to the glory of God and the benefit of the world.

Let these two things be always kept together: the compassion of the Redeemer, and the purpose of that compassion. No compassion for sin has ever been like his, because no one like him ever understood the consequences of sin. But that compassion was shown in the only way of true mercy, by the conversion of the sinner. How emphatically St. Paul asks, "Know ye not that the unrighteous

shall not inherit the kingdom of God?" "Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them."⁵ "For without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

LECTURE XLIII.

JESUS DISCOURSES FURTHER WITH THE JEWS, AND SHOWS CAUSE WHY THEY OUGHT TO RECEIVE HIM; AND WHAT MUST BE THE END OF THEIR REJECTING HIM.

JOHN viii. 12—24.

12. *Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.*

13. *The Pharisees therefore said unto him, Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true.*

14. *Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go.*

15. *Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man.*

16. *And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me.*

⁵ 1 Cor. vi. 9. Eph. v. 6.

17. *It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true.*¹

18. *I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me.*

19. *Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also.*

20. *These words spake Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple: and no man laid hands on him; for his hour was not yet come.*

Every reasonable proof was given to the Jews that they were bound to receive Jesus as the Messiah. He asserts himself to be *the light of the world. He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.* They make an objection, that the testimony which a man gives of himself, and in his own favour, is not worthy of credit. *Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true.* He replies, that he must needs bear record of himself, because he alone could understand whence he came, and to what end: *I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go.* For, according to the prophecy, “Who shall declare his generation?”² But then he adds, that his testi-

¹ Deut. xix. 15. “One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.”

² Is. liii. 8.

mony was not alone, not unsupported: their law allowed that the testimony of two witnesses should be received as true: and here was the testimony of two; here was his own testimony, and his Father's testimony. His Father had borne witness to him by a voice from heaven: "This is my beloved Son." His Father was daily repeating the same testimony by the power which Jesus exercised: as he said, "The works which I do in my Father's name, these bear witness of me:" "if ye believe not me, believe the works." So that there was no defect of proof, had the mind been open and unprejudiced. No proof will avail, when that is closed against conviction.

21. *Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come.*

22. *Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself? because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come.*

23. *And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world.*

24. *I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.*

Here was an awful consideration, little understood. Jesus was looking forward to that time, not now far distant, when he should ascend again to the glory which he had with the Father "before the world was:" to that presence where is

“fulness of joy:” to that place where is “pleasure for evermore.” And there are those who shall be with him there. He has assured us, that where he is, there also shall his servant be: and that to him that overcometh, he will grant to sit with him on his throne. But to these who now opposed and rejected him, he openly declares, “Ye shall seek me, but ye shall not find me.” *Whither I go, ye cannot come.*

For two plain reasons. They had refused to seek admission in the way that God proposed. And they were in their characters unfit for the kingdom of heaven.

1. They had rejected the offer made them. Jesus had expressly said, “Whoso believeth on me, I will raise him up at the last day.” But they denied the authority of his words, set aside the testimony of his miracles, treated him with disdain and scorn, instead of respectful inquiry, and now went about to kill him. “Therefore he said, Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life.” And if they would not come unto him, who is the “author of eternal life,” where was their hope? They had closed the door against themselves.

To them, and to all, there is but one mode of access to the place where the Lord Jesus is, and will for ever be. He is “the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by him.”

2. Such is the Father's will. But there is a reason for it. They who are to dwell in heaven, must be prepared for heaven. Their evil nature must be renewed and purified. They must "put off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;—and must put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."³ "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

But all this was utterly distasteful to the scribes and Pharisees and other opposers of our Lord. That he required holiness, and rebuked ungodliness, was the real objection against him. He demanded the worship "of spirit and of truth:" they assumed a "form of godliness," pretended to outward sanctity, while within they were "full of hypocrisy and iniquity."⁴ How could such stand "before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple?"⁵ So base was their state of heart, that they took no interest in the conversion of sinners, or the restoration of health to wretched sufferers. How could such dwell with him, whose character it is to be "full of compassion and mercy, long suffering and of great goodness?" They "shut up the kingdom of heaven against men, and would not suffer them that were entering to go in:"⁶ how should they be admitted into it themselves? They were unjust and violent, and

³ Eph. iv. 22. 24.

⁵ Rev. vii. 15.

⁴ Matt. xxiii. 28.

⁶ Mat. xxiii. 13.

extortionate and cruel : how could they have place with him who loves justice and mercy ? They exalted themselves and despised others : where was that meek and contrite spirit which God receives and approves, because it is the only state which befits a frail and guilty man ?

Here then was a second reason, why they must be for ever excluded from that “new heaven and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” Their dispositions, their characters, were a barrier against them. They were *from beneath*, he was *from above* : *they were of this world ; he was not of this world.* So that *where he was, they could not come.* A moral gulf lay between them and him. He was now offering to lead them across it, and to place them on the side of heaven : but they rejected the hand which he stretched out ; and they would soon find the barrier impassable for ever. *If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.*

This was not more seriously important to the Pharisees than it is to ourselves. “Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle ? who shall dwell in thy holy hill ? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart : in whose eyes a vile person is contemned : but he honoureth them that fear the Lord.”⁷ There must be a suitableness to the nature of heaven, in those who are to inhabit

⁷ Ps. xv.

heaven. "For what fellowship hath light with darkness?" what communion has that which is *from beneath*, with that which is *from above*? that which is *of this world*, with that which is *not of this world*? Though it is not the will of God "that any should perish," we cannot but perceive that the character of the wicked excludes them from heaven: and their character remains what it is, because they "hate to be reformed," and "cast the words of God behind them."

Too late, there may be a time of sorrow and remorse. *Jesus said unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins.* The accepted time must be seized, the day of salvation not neglected. Such is the awful warning elsewhere pronounced to these same people. "When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are."⁸ *Where I am, ye cannot come.*

⁸ Luke xiii. 25.

LECTURE XLIV.

DISCOURSE WITH THE JEWS CONTINUED.
FREEDOM IS PROMISED TO THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST.

JOHN viii. 25—32.

25. *Then said they unto him, Who art thou? And Jesus saith unto them, Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning.*

26. *I have many things to say and to judge of you : but he that sent me is true ; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him.*

27. *They understood not that he spake to them of the Father.*

28. *Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself ; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.*

29. *And he that sent me is with me : the Father hath not left me alone ; for I do always those things that please him.*

Many proofs had Jesus given already, that he was the expected and predicted Deliverer. But the great and irresistible proof was yet to come. *When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he.* They should lift him up on the cross, intending to degrade him to the

lowest infamy: but in so doing, they should really exalt him to the glory which belonged to him. He would burst the bonds of death, and his resurrection should be the seal of his truth. Therefore he looks onward to this, and to the more plentiful influence of the Holy Spirit which should follow. *When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he.* And a divine power accompanied his words, which many were unable to resist.

30. *As he spake these words, many believed on him.*

31. *Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;*

32. *And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*

The truth shall make you free. Such is the effect which Jesus here ascribes to the words which he had delivered, to the doctrines which he came to reveal. They confer FREEDOM.

We are hardly aware, how far the world in general is from being free. The Jews were not aware of the bondage in which they were held, as appears by their answer, which will afterwards come to be considered. They did not perceive that they were *servants of sin*. They did not perceive that Satan was their master, and kept them beneath his yoke. That yoke has many branches. Open and indulged sin is one: the first, from which

THE TRUTH, "the truth as it is in Jesus," releases man.

But there is another chain by which men are tied and bound till they have obtained the same deliverance. They are enslaved by the power of THE WORLD. "

The cares, the treasures, the honours, the manners of the world, keep multitudes in a state, which may be justly termed a state of bondage. They are harassed by apprehensions that their store should grow less instead of greater: lest themselves, or their children, or their families, should be reduced to a worse condition than they were born to. Or they are in bondage to the opinions of men, and the customs which prevail; deterred from what they feel to be right, or seduced into what they feel to be wrong, or at least restrained from seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, through dread of their friends, their neighbours, their companions. Can such be called free? Nicodemus was not free; when, though convinced that Jesus came from God by the mighty works he did, he dared not openly consult him, but sought him at night, that he might not offend his brethren the Pharisees. Those "chief rulers" were not free, whom we find mentioned afterwards, (xii. 42,) who, though perceiving that Jesus was the Christ, "did not confess him, because of the Pharisees, lest they should be put out of the synagogue." Pilate was

not free, when he would gladly have done justice, and released Jesus, but dared not, lest he should offend the people, and be accused before Cæsar. Freedom, is to do what we see it best to do, what we desire to do. But all these desired to declare themselves on the side of Jesus: which yet they could not do, because they were bound by their love of this world, and enslaved by the fear of man.

Well then might the Lord say to these, and such as these, *The truth shall make you free*. The Gospel affords reasons and motives which both deliver a man from the shackles of worldly care, and raise him above the paltry dread of his fellow creatures. It enables him to act according to the dictates of his own conscience and his reason, to choose the real good, and reject the real evil. The martyr was free even at the stake, when he replied to his executioners, You offer me present ease and present life; but my object is life and happiness eternal: and I can brave a present evil for the sake of an everlasting gain. And so it is in all things. When the truth of the gospel is received into the heart, and made the principle of action, the man becomes *free indeed*: free to seek his highest good, his real interest, his everlasting advantage. For “this is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith,” our Christian faith; which enables a man to say, I fear my God, and have no other fear: I serve my God, and own no other master.

Another yoke, by which men are commonly weighed down, and from which the truth as it is in Jesus delivers them, is the FEAR OF DEATH. St. Paul speaks of this as an important result of the Redeemer's mercy : it delivers them, who "through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."¹ It is a bondage, perhaps, which men are unwilling to own, and are hardly conscious of themselves. But it is bondage, to keep out of sight an enemy which must be at last encountered : to know that an event is certain, and yet use every art to exclude it from our thoughts. And how seldom is the fact steadily contemplated, that in a few years, at farthest, we shall be in the grave ! Even in illness, how seldom will friends, or nurses, or physicians, acknowledge what yet they believe to be the case ; this "sickness is unto death !" They know that the truth would be unwelcome, and therefore they conceal it.

From this bondage, *the truth* relieves the Christian. Not by deceiving him, and closing his eyes to what is really formidable ; but by opening his eyes to the way of safety. Not by making him careless and indifferent, which in such a case is want of reason ; but by giving him a ground, a solid ground of confidence. *The truth* is, that "there is no condemnation for those that are in Christ Jesus:" that he has made a full, perfect, and complete satisfaction for the sins of all that

¹ Heb. ii. 15.

trust in him : that God has covenanted to receive all such, as the “righteous,” for whom his “kingdom is prepared.” The heart of the Christian testifies within him, that this is his trust : he knows “in whom he has believed :” and his life bears outward witness to what his heart thus testifies within ; he walks “not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Therefore death and judgment, and the world to come, are not strange things to one who *knows the truth* : things which he never loves to think of, never admits into his mind from choice : but they make, as it were, a constituent part of this present life : and this world, and that which is to come, are as much united in his daily contemplations, as they are in fact connected by the will of the Almighty. And thus THE TRUTH has delivered him from that fear, to which others are continually in bondage. “For the sting of death is sin.” “And the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin.”

This is the freedom which the Lord had in view when he *said to those Jews which believed in him, Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.* This is part of “the glorious liberty of the sons of God ;” and accompanies that deliverance from the dominion of sin which is the first achievement and effect of Christian faith.

And how encouraging the promise, *Ye shall know the truth!* Ye shall seek it, and ye shall find it, if ye seek it with your whole heart. Ye

shall not be left to yourselves, but the Spirit shall attend, assist, and direct your inquiry. You may not indeed immediately realize the promise. You may not at once perceive either the extent of your bondage by nature, or the completeness of that deliverance which Christ Jesus has effected for you. But in the end ye shall know it, *if ye continue in his word*: ye shall know that truth, which he who cannot deceive, selects from other truths which are in the world, and other truths which are in scripture, and describes as **THE TRUTH**, the one important truth: and *that shall make you free*.

LECTURE XLV.

DISCOURSE CONTINUED. FREEDOM FROM
THE YOKE OF SIN CONFERRED UPON
THE CHRISTIAN.

JOHN viii. 33—36.

The Jews with whom our Lord was discoursing, and to whom he had given the promise that the truth should make them free, were like all other persons whom Satan holds under his power. They

would not acknowledge their state of bondage. They did not feel it. As St. Peter describes them, (2 Ep. ii. 19,) “ While they promise liberty to others, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.”

So when they heard the Lord say to those Jews who believed in him, *If ye continue in my word, ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free,*

33. *They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?*

34. *Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.*

And it is a just saying. Who can be farther from freedom, who more completely in bondage, than the man who, despising the laws of God, laws mercifully given to protect us from ruin, indulges his evil passions, and yields to the desires of the flesh and of the mind? Satan “leads him captive at his will.” This is often felt and acknowledged: there are seasons when the sensual, and the covetous, and the profane, and the intemperate, confess their misery, and would gladly escape from the net in which they are entangled. But it is impossible: “impossible with man:” the ungodly, cannot imitate the faith which they reverence: the covetous cannot forego their opportunity and

neglect their treasure: the passionate are overcome with anger: the impure hurried away by temptation: the intemperate must swallow their poison. And is this freedom? or is it the yoke of a most galling bondage? “His servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness.”¹

From this state of thralldom Jesus asserts his power and his readiness to deliver them. He proceeds,

35. *And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever.*

36. *If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*

While they were the servants of sin and Satan, they could not *abide in the house* of God;—in his heavenly kingdom. There are many mansions there; but none for unrepented sin. *But the Son abideth ever.* For “of the Son the scripture saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.” “The Father hath delivered all things into his hand, because he is the Son of man.” *If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*

Here, then, is a clear and a most important promise; that Christ Jesus will deliver those who “continue in his word, and are his disciples indeed,” from the dominion of sin. It is the promise of the whole gospel. It began with his birth. “His name was called Jesus, for he should

¹ Rom. vi. 16.

save his people from their sins.” And the message was first delivered in the same language. “God sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.”²

St. Paul has shown us how this process is carried on in the heart of the Christian. He first sees the danger of his present state. It is proved to him by the cross of Christ, which stands before his eyes, as an evidence of the end to which sin leads. “For the wages of sin is death:” “indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, reserved for every soul of man that doeth evil.” This awakens a desire to escape from that dominion by which he is enthralled. Whoever is in bondage, must first feel an earnest desire to escape, before he bestirs himself to seek the means. And such is the account of the apostle. (Rom. vii. 23.) “I find a law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

Here is a just description of captivity. “Who shall deliver me?” Who shall deliver me from my unhallowed passions, my rebellious thoughts? who shall restrain the proud imaginations of my heart? who shall release me from covetousness, envy, malice: from the besetting sin—whatever it may be—of my nature and my habits? These enslave me: have possession of me: and from their do-

² Acts iii. 26.

minion I can no more release myself, than I can create myself anew. And then follows the delight of one who sees the prospect open before him, whose preserver is at hand. "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." He shall deliver me. He can do, what man cannot do, give "a new heart and a right spirit." He offers such assurances of pardon, such persuasive motives, such present peace, such future hopes and promises, that the bonds which enchained my sinful heart are broken, and I am no longer the slave of Satan. He fills my heart with the truth, and *the truth shall make me free.*

This then is the deliverance enjoyed by the disciple of Christ Jesus. "The spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made him free from the law of sin and death." Sin is an enemy, but a conquered enemy. It may disturb, and rebel, and harass, and injure; but it cannot subdue or destroy. And this is to be *free indeed*: because it is the being enabled to act according to a man's best interests, both present and eternal. Well may the apostle speak of the "glorious liberty of the sons of God." And well may He be described as a Saviour, who came "to save his people from their sins."

We are now able, by uniting together what has been said in this and the preceding lecture, to form a just estimate of our own state, and inquire how far THE TRUTH, that is, the gospel, has had

its proper effect upon ourselves. It has not its proper effect, unless it has freed you from the dominion of sin : so that no habitual transgression of God's will can any more be allowed in your practice, than you would suffer an assassin to continue in your house, or poison to be mixed up with your daily food. It has not its proper effect, unless you are free from the control of "this present world ;" and in all things you consider, not what is generally done, not what is apparently expedient to private interests, or pleasing to the inclination of others, but what agrees with the analogy of Scripture, the example of Christ, the will of God, the prospect of everlasting glory. It has not its proper effect, unless you are delivered from any servile fear of death, and can look forward to an event which you know must come, and which cannot be very distant, as the door of an everlasting kingdom, purchased for you by an Almighty Saviour, whom by faith you have made your own.

Be not satisfied with any thing short of this. Look to the faith which you profess, as able to carry you beyond this world, to exalt you above it. For "he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God," "overcometh the world."³ *Continue in his word*, for so shall ye be *his disciples indeed* : and learn by happy experience, that his "service is perfect freedom."

³ See 1 John v. 4, 5.

LECTURE XLVI.

DISCOURSE WITH THE JEWS CONTINUED.
THE CHILDREN OF GOD AND THE CHILDREN OF SATAN DISTINGUISHED.

JOHN viii. 37—47.

37. *I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you.*

38. *I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father.*

39. *They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.*

40. *But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham.*

41. *Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.¹*

42. *Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.*

43. *Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word.*

¹ We are the genuine descendants of Abraham, not by Ishmael or Esau, but by Jacob and the patriarchs.

Most persons, if not utterly insensible to religion, have some reason satisfactory to themselves why they should be at ease with regard to God. The Jewish people at this time had such a reason. It satisfied them, that they were the posterity of Abraham, whom God had especially blessed and chosen: they were the race which he had “avouched to be his peculiar people, a holy people unto the Lord.” There was much among themselves to keep up a vain confidence. They were consecrated to God by the rite of circumcision: they differed from the other nations of the world, which worshipped idols, and could give no reasonable account of the creation. And to this they trusted. John the Baptist had alluded to their false confidence, saying, (Luke iii. 8,) “Begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father.” Think not thus to shelter yourselves from the wrath of the God of Abraham. And St. Paul assails the same delusion: (Rom. ii. 17:) “Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law. Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking of the law dishonourest thou God? For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in

the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."

Our Lord here uses the same language. *If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.* He is not a son of Abraham, who is merely one of the nation descended from him; but he who has the faith and the piety and the virtues of Abraham. "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness;" ye refuse the testimony which God has given of his Son. Abraham was just and honourable:—ye neglect the "weighty matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith." Abraham honoured Melchizedec, the priest of God:—ye "kill the prophets, and stone them which are sent unto you." *This did not Abraham.* He pitied those against whom God had declared his anger, and interceded for the guilty inhabitants of Sodom:—ye "shut up the kingdom of heaven against men," discourage the penitent, and scorn the meek and humble. *This did not Abraham.* *And if ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.* There is another parent, to whom your character proves you to belong: even he who is the parent of all sin. "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doeth not righteousness, is not of God."

44. *Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is*

no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

45. *And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.*

46. *Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?*

47. *He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.*

An awful consideration is involved in these words. There are those who are of God, and those who are not of God: "children of light," and "children of darkness:" "children of the kingdom," and "children of the wicked one." These "grow up together until the harvest;" and then each is gathered into his own place: the children of the wicked one are cast into outer darkness, "the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of the Father."

Of which family do we form a part? This is the truly important question. And two proofs are given in this discourse, by which the truth may be ascertained. *Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God.* This is the first sign. To see Jesus Christ as the object of reverence and affection, is the first proof of a child of God. The apostles make it so. Whosoever loveth the Father, loveth also the Son.² "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be

² 1 John v. 1.

Anathema, Maran-atha.”³ To the children of this world, he is the object of scorn or enmity. Of scorn, because he bids them renounce things temporal for things eternal: and of enmity, because “he reproves them of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.” But “to them that believe he is precious,” because he gives them a hope on which they can depend, a foundation on which they may stand secure. His person is precious; for he was wounded for their transgressions, and bruised for their iniquities. His promises are precious; for he has declared himself a refuge to all the weary and heavy laden: and has engaged that “whosoever cometh unto him, he will in no wise cast out.” Let men be once taught of God to see their own weakness, sinfulness, nothingness, and Jesus receives all the love which is due to a deliverer, a protector, a friend, a brother.

The second sign of belonging to God’s family, is that we receive his words. *He that is of God, heareth God’s words.* The son does not reject the absent father’s message; he studies it, prizes it, desires to fulfil it. “The words of God are verity and judgment; all his commandments are true.” But those do not hearken to them, who are not of God. He requires sincerity, purity, integrity, charity, temperance. He declares that without these qualities no one can enter into his kingdom. This must be distasteful to “the children of disobe-

³ 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

dience:” they are *of their father the devil, and the lusts of that father they will do*. But they that *are of God* hear these words with reverence, and their hearts answer to them. They respond to them with their reason and conscience; they “delight in the law of God after the inner man:” and if flesh and blood, if the natural and corrupt elements rebel against it, this attaches them still more closely to him on whose grace they depend, and who “is able to save unto the uttermost.”

Inquire then of yourselves, according to these two tests. Do you unite with the Psalmist, when he says, “How dear are thy counsels unto me, O God! More to be desired are they than gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.” Do you agree with the apostle when he describes the feeling of the Christian towards his Saviour? “Whom having not seen, ye love; and in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable.” For if ye are “born of God,” ye love him who *proceeded forth and came from God*: if ye are the “children of God,” ye *hear your Father’s words*.

LECTURE XLVII.

DISCOURSE WITH THE JEWS CONTINUED.
THEY ACCUSE HIM OF BLASPHEMY.

JOHN viii. 48—59.

48. *Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan,¹ and hast a devil?*

49. *Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me.*

50. *And I seek not mine own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth.*

51. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.*

We have here, in one short sentence, first, the character of him whom Christ acknowledges as his own:—*If a man keep my saying*:—observes it, cherishes it, lives upon it: as is said of Mary his mother; she “kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.” And we are told, further, the privilege which belongs to him;—*he shall never taste of death*: its real bitterness shall be un-

¹ Here used as a general term of reproach. One who did not agree with themselves on the subject of religion.

known to him. For the real bitterness of death arises from the wrath of God : and he is at “peace with God through Jesus Christ.” He shall indeed see the hour of death, like other men : dust he is, and to dust he must return : but that hour is disarmed of the sting which makes it terrible, and it shall be the commencement of a state where there is “no more death, neither sorrow nor crying.”

Those, however, who were now discoursing with the Lord, had none of that spiritual sense by which these truths are understood. It appears by their reply.

52. Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets ; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death.

53. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead ? and the prophets are dead : whom makest thou thyself ?

54. Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing : it is my Father that honoureth me ; of whom ye say, that he is your God :

55. Yet ye have not known him ; but I know him : and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you : but I know him, and keep his saying.

56. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day : and he saw it, and was glad.

The difference was great indeed between the feelings of this generation, and the feelings of their

father Abraham, concerning the coming of the Son of man. Abraham rejoiced, exulted, when the promise was made to him, that “as the stars of heaven, so should his seed be.”² Abraham rejoiced, when he received the assurance, “I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.”³ Abraham rejoiced when the glad tidings were announced to him; when it was declared by God himself, that “in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed.”⁴ He too, “like many prophets and righteous men,” desired to see the accomplishment of this promise. He too, like they, “inquired and searched diligently what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.”⁵ And this he *saw*, by the revelation which God granted him. With what clearness or to what extent he saw it, we cannot distinctly tell; but he saw that which he was glad to see, that which he rejoiced in, of the mercy of God in the redemption of the world, of the blessing vouchsafed to “all the nations of the earth.” And if, in his present separate state, his soul was allowed to witness the fulfilment of all the promises; if he *saw the day*, when “of his seed according to the flesh” that

² Gen. xv. 5.³ Gen. xvii. 7.⁴ Gen. xxii. 18.⁵ 1 Pet. i. 11.

son was born to whom the promise was made; if he heard the angels hymn, announcing, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men:” then we may be sure that his joy would be full, and his heart be glad, for his “eyes had seen the salvation” of God.⁶

57. *Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?*

58. *Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.*⁷

59. *Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.*

By the nature of what he asserted, and by the manner in which it was expressed—*Before Abraham was, I am*—they perceived that he made “himself equal with God:”—and they took up stones to cast at him.

Such would have been the regular punishment of his crime, had he spoken blasphemy. Here it was the illegal expression of popular violence and enmity, excited by a claim of Godhead which they would not stop to examine. He justified it, how-

⁶ Many consider this to be the proper interpretation of the passage: he *has seen* it, and rejoiced. The tenses of the verbs, εἶδε, and ἔχαρη, do not suit this; neither does it agree with the reply of the Jews.

⁷ Thus using the very expression by which God had declared himself to Moses, (Ex. iii. 14,) I AM THAT I AM: and so purposely showing, that “he and the Father are one.”

ever, by escaping their sight, and so delivering himself from their vengeance. His time was not yet come: it was not yet “given them from above,” to have any “power at all against him.” And they never could have any “power at all against him, except it were given them from above.”⁸ For “he was God,” who “was in the beginning with God.” Before Abraham was, before any thing was, he had been: for he had been from everlasting.

This assurance is inexpressibly valuable to those who believe that he is “indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.” It gives a strength and a reality to all their hopes and expectations, that their salvation has been so wrought out: has been the care of Him, who together with the form and nature and sympathy of man, is possessed of the majesty and attributes of God. “To Abraham and his seed were the promises made.” But he who was to fulfil these promises, was already in existence; had existed from eternity: and when he offers eternal life to as many as believe in him, he offers of his own, and imparts that which he has himself possessed from everlasting.

Such is he, by whom “are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises.” Such is that “divine power which hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and

⁸ John xix. 11.

virtue.”⁴ Let our acquaintance with the greatness of the giver, exalt our sense of the value of the gift; and lead us to take the more earnest heed that we “lay hold on eternal life,” and do not “receive the grace of God in vain.”

LECTURE XLVIII.

SIGHT GIVEN TO ONE WHO HAD BEEN BORN BLIND.

JOHN ix. 1—12.

1. *And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth.*

2. *And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?*

3. *Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.*

4. *I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.*

5. *As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.*

When the impotent man had received his cure at the pool of Bethesda, he was dismissed with the

⁴ See 2 Pet. i. 3, 4.

warning, "Go, and sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee." Perhaps this was remembered by the disciples: and led them to the question, *Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?* Or perhaps they wished to hear him resolve that difficult question, in the words of Job, (iii. 20, 21,) "Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul; which long for death, but it cometh not?"

One thing is certain, that all evil began with sin. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."¹ When we look upon sufferings of mind or body, they should at once suggest the thought to us, that we witness the effects of sin.

But we are here taught not to ascribe particular calamities to particular sins. Though the hand of God ought always to be acknowledged, the purpose of God cannot always be discovered. Here he had a wise and merciful purpose, which men could never have divined: that *the works of God should be made manifest* in this man: that the *light of the world*, He whom God had sent to deliver the world from spiritual blindness, might show forth in him the power in which he came.

Unquestionably a similar purpose is answered, by the various conditions and numerous calamities

¹ Rom. v. 12.

which exist in the world. They give opportunity for manifesting those characters and qualities which God expects to be employed. Active sympathy, self-denying charity, are *works of God* : and are manifested when indigence is assisted, when pain is assuaged, when sorrow is relieved, when the fatherless and widow are visited in their affliction.

It would be happy if all felt and acted upon the sentiment which Jesus utters—*I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day*. Short indeed is the time which is given to any man, to prove his faith ; to show what master he serves, and for what world he lives. And bitter has been the remorse of many, who when the night came upon them, have been haunted by the sad reflection, how much they had done for a world which was now vanishing ; how little they had done for God !

6. *When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay,*

7. *And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.*

8. *The neighbours therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged?*

9. *Some said, This is he : others said, He is like him : but he said, I am he.*

10. *Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened?*

11. *He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight.*

12. *Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said, I know not.*

It would be loss of time to inquire why it pleased Jesus to spit on the ground, and make clay of the spittle, and anoint the eyes of the blind man with the clay; instead of saying to the man at once, Receive thy sight. We may suppose, however, that the command given to him, *Go, wash in the pool of Siloam*, was intended as a trial of his faith. A similar method was employed with Naaman the Syrian; (2 Kings v. 10;) “Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.” The reason of this command we know. It tried the faith and temper of the Syrian. At first he was indignant; but being brought by wise remonstrance to a better mind, “he went down and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again, like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.”

This man, like Naaman, might have found much to say, why the water of Siloam could never give sight to a man who had been blind from his birth.

But he did not argue; he obeyed. *He went his way therefore.* And his faith was rewarded: *he came seeing.*

How well does this illustrate both the character and the effect of Christian faith! The invitation is universally given: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." We are exhorted, under a sense of the evils of life, of the bondage of sin, of the fear of death, to apply to him whom God sent into the world to be a Prince and a Saviour for the remission of sins. The human heart may find many reasons, like those of Naaman, for refusing. "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean?" So Naaman thought: and it might be asked, How could the nature of God be united with the nature of man? How could God undergo suffering? How could the suffering of one atone for the sins of another? How can the belief of that atonement overcome the evil dispositions of the heart, or renew the spirit of the mind?

It were easy to argue thus; and thus we fear too many do argue, and put from them the word of life, the offer of salvation. But as the man who washed in Jordan was recovered of his leprosy: as this man who went blind to the pool of Siloam, left his blindness there, and *came back seeing*: so

will it be found by all who simply credit the commands and promises of Scripture, and act upon them. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Wash away thy sins in the blood of the cross, and the blessings of God's covenant are thine. The effect will be as clearly seen, as in the case of this miracle. Comfort succeeds, where before was anxiety: peace exists, where before was turbulence: the heart is set on things above, where before this world was predominant. And the cause may be explained; the account as clearly given. He that on earth was called Jesus invited me to trust in him, that I might find rest unto my soul: and I prayed him to grant me peace, and I enjoyed it: I prayed him to give me strength against my sins, and I possess it. Such has been the experience of multitudes: and such may be the experience of all.

The man who had received sight, was asked, *Where is he?* We have a certain answer to that question; he is set down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, where he ever liveth to make intercession for us. "Ask of him, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

LECTURE XLIX.

INQUIRY OF THE PHARISEES INTO THE
CASE OF THE MAN WHO HAD RECEIVED
HIS SIGHT.

JOHN ix. 13—34.

13. *They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind.*

14. *And it was the sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes.*

15. *Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see.*

16. *Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them.*

17. *They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a prophet.*

Where prejudice and enmity exist, such as the Pharisees indulged against Jesus, it is never at a loss for argument. It perverts the most innocent sentiments, or misrepresents the most laudable actions. It shows exactly the opposite spirit to that charity which St. Paul describes as constituting

the Christian temper. "Charity hopeth all things." Prejudice aggravates all things. "Charity thinketh no evil." Prejudice allows no good. "Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth." Prejudice is careless as to truth, and rejoiceth when the charge of iniquity can be fastened on its object, whether through the fault of human infirmity, or the report of calumny. Therefore, said some of the Pharisees on this occasion, *This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day.* So they had often endeavoured to turn aside the effect of those miracles which bore witness of him. It is the sabbath day on which he has shown this mercy : therefore he *is not of God.* Their enmity did not allow them to perceive, that the recovering of sight to the blind was one of the clearest marks by which their expected Messiah was to be known. "Their foolish heart was darkened," so that "seeing they saw not, and hearing they did not understand."

Had their objection been sincere, and founded on a just sense of what was due to the day which God had hallowed, there was a plain and simple answer, which might have removed all doubt and scruple. *How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?* This was so manifest, as at once to convince the man who had received the cure. When he was asked, *What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes?* He said, *He is a prophet.* He is one whom God hath commissioned to instruct and comfort his people. The man

could not at present know that he was more than a prophet: but this he knew, and this was enough to satisfy him, that such power, such mercy, could have no other source.

Here then was the condemnation of the Pharisees. If there was real cause to hesitate concerning the divine commission of our Lord, they had just excuse in rejecting him. But there was no such pretext, and their sin remained upon them: a wilful, presumptuous sin: they were “not of the truth,” and therefore he who told them the truth was hateful to them.

And let all beware, how they permit the prejudices of habit or imperfect education, or the notions which are current around them, to prevail against the simple truth of the Gospel: to conceal from their minds the condemning guilt of man, or the atoning mercy of Christ.

18. *But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight.*

19. *And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? how then doth he now see?*

20. *His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind:*

21. *But by what means he now seeth, we know not or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself.*

22. *These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that*

if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.

23. *Therefore said his parents, He is of age ; ask him.*

24. *Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise : we know that this man is a sinner.*

25. *He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not : one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.*

26. *Then said they to him again, What did he to thee ? how opened he thine eyes ?*

27. *He answered them, I have told you already, and ye did not hear : wherefore would ye hear it again ? will ye also be his disciples ?*

28. *Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple ; but we are Moses' disciples.*

29. *We know that God spake unto Moses : as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is.*

30. *The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes.*

31. *Now we know that God heareth not sinners : but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.*

32. *Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind.*

33. *If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.*

34. *They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us ? And they cast him out.*

It was at no small risk, therefore, that any man ventured to declare his belief in Jesus. But this person, though he had laboured under the disadvantages of blindness, had been endued by God with qualities more valuable than that of which he was deprived. The eyes of his understanding were opened, though the eyes of his body had been closed. He knew what the oracles of God declared, that, *God heareth not sinners*. David had not spoken in vain:—"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."¹ He knew further what all the history of his country proved, that "the eyes of God are over the righteous, and his ears open to their prayers." Therefore he perceived the evident truth, that *if this man were not of God, he could do nothing*.

But he had justly observed already, it was vain to speak this to men who would not hear. *Wherefore would ye hear it again? will ye also be his disciples?* However clear the argument, or evident the fact, they would not be his disciples. They cannot reply to his plain reasoning; but they can revile and persecute. *Thou wast altogether born in sins*—thy misfortune proves thee to have been accursed of God from thy birth—and *dost thou teach us? And they cast him out*.

Those who love darkness rather than light, will use the means which are in their hands to keep in darkness all by whom they are surrounded. So

¹ Ps. lxvi. 18.

the Pharisees cast out, put out of the synagogue, the man whose reasoning they could not resist or gainsay. Had he not been taught of God, and therefore wiser than his teachers; had there not been the motions of a Spirit within him, which enabled him to love the praise of God more than the praise of man, he would not have dared to oppose their sentiments. This gave him a boldness which nothing else could give, a liberty which would not be restrained. He who when the morning rose was a beggar asking alms, is now raised above the governors of the land and the leaders of the people. He acts according to his reason and his conscience, which neither Herod nor Pilate dared to do: he declares the honest conviction of his soul that *if this man were not of God, he could do nothing*. He is one of the many examples of the foolish things of the world which "God hath chosen to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world which God hath chosen to confound the things which are mighty."² What "he hath hid from the wise and prudent, he hath revealed unto babes."

² 1 Cor. i. 27; Matt. xi. 25.

LECTURE L.

THE HAUGHTY AND SELF-RIGHTEOUS SPIRIT OF THE PHARISEES CONDEMNED.

JOHN ix. 35—41.

35. *Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God?*

36. *He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him;*

37. *And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee.*

38. *And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.*

Thus the man who had lost the favour of his countrymen, received an ample recompense. Jesus did not neglect or overlook him; did not leave him comfortless. He searched him out and found him, and revealed himself as the Son of God, of whose power the man had already seen such undoubted evidence.

There were no reasons of prejudice or interest to cloud this poor man's mind: no worldly mists to interrupt the clearness of his view. At once he exclaimed, *Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.*

This gives an instance of the manner in which our blessed Lord observes the circumstances of his people. This man had risked every thing and lost every thing, by daring to “confess that he was Christ.” But he should lose nothing in the end; nay, he should have “manifold more in this present time;” manifold more in the favour of the Son of God, than he could have gained by the praise of men.

Many sincere Christians have complained that they walk in darkness, and have no light; that to them the comforts seem to be denied which others have enjoyed. Is it not that, in the possession of ease and outward prosperity, they have less needed the special refreshments of the Spirit? Perhaps, indeed, they have rather needed to be humbled and kept low. But we here learn how surely he whom they believe, he whom they worship, keeps his eye upon them; and should the season of their need arrive, will *find* them, and manifest himself unto them. He giveth not “as the world giveth,” but when the world giveth not. “When my father and my mother forsake me, the Lord taketh me up.”

Very different, however, is the effect of the same truth on different minds. And therefore *Jesus said*—observing the case of this humble worshipper, and of the obdurate Pharisees—

39. *For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.*

40. *And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also ?*

41. *Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin : but now ye say, We see ; therefore your sin remaineth.*

The effects of all spiritual instruction are similar. It brings character to light: it shows what is in the heart. And, as the apostle says, “The earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God. But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing.”¹

In this case, the warnings of Jesus showed the obstinacy of those who heard them; his expostulations proved their contempt of God’s word; and his instructions, their self-conceit and pride. *Are we blind also ?* We who are “instructed out of the law, and make our boast of God,”² can we have any thing to learn ?

Upon which they are told the awful truth, that the unavoidable ignorance of many meets with more favour in the sight of God, than the pride of others, who in their conceit are “rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.” *Now ye say, We see ; therefore your sin remaineth.*

Consider, then, the spirit, the state of mind, which is here condemned. It is seen in action,

¹ Heb. vi. 7.

² Rom. ii. 17, 18.

when the Pharisee says thus within himself, "Lord, I thank thee that I am not as other men are." It is seen in the language of a previous discourse, "This people who knoweth not the law are cursed." It is seen in what had been just said to the man whose eyes had been opened, "Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us?" These men are confident, that they are "guides to the blind, instructors of the foolish;" and know not that they are "blind guides," who think themselves to be something, when in fact they "seeing see not, and hearing they do not understand."

There is a self-satisfaction and complacency which is implied in the sentiment, *we see*—which is directly opposed to the spirit that accompanies salvation. The spirit is never satisfied: never thinks that enough is known or enough done. The children of this world are active as well as "wise in their generation:" they are always seeking, "Who will shew us any good?" Who will discover for us a new mode of pleasure, or open a new path of gain? And so the children of God will be ever inquiring, how they can discover more of his character or of his will. They do not indeed pay implicit credence to every teacher. Jesus did not demand this. He expressly says, "If I had not done amongst them deeds such as never man did, they had not had sin." It is one thing to believe every teacher; and another to refuse to

“try the spirits, whether they be of God.” The Jews refused to try the spirit in which Jesus came. And multitudes, from a like disposition of mind, set themselves against an argument or an expostulation, because it may possibly prove them to be wrong. It was the true prophet whom Ahab refused to hear :³ and there is something of his disposition in many who reject a book, or turn away from an argument, because it “does not prophesy good concerning them.” Whereas the rule is to “prove all things, and hold fast that which is good.” It is no proof that we are wrong, that others think us so : but neither is it any proof of being right, that we believe ourselves right. “With me,” says St. Paul, “it is a very small thing to be judged of man, or of man’s judgment : yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself : (I am conscious of no evil against myself :) yet am I not hereby justified : but he that judgeth me is the Lord.”⁴

Therefore “let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak :”⁵ slow to speak in his own favour, as if truth could only dwell with himself : and slower still to speak in condemnation of others : but let him be swift to hear, for he has much to learn, and it may be much to unlearn. Such is the child-like spirit, with which the kingdom of heaven must be received : the spirit

³ See 1 Kings xxii. 8.

⁴ 1 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

⁵ James i. 9.

which Eli displayed, when he, the aged priest, the judge of Israel, required the infant Samuel to hide nothing from him of all the things which the Lord had said unto him.⁶ “What is the thing that the Lord hath said unto thee? I pray thee, hide it not from me.” Whoever has a due sense (a due sense, indeed, no one has—but whoever has an enlightened sense) of the value of the soul, will feel that when so much is at stake, nothing must be slighted or neglected, which can relate to its welfare. The eyes of many have been opened to danger which they had long despised, even on this side the grave. It is melancholy to reflect, that at the day of judgment, the eyes of many more may be opened, which had been wilfully closed here: the eyes of those who had said, *we see ;—therefore their sin remaineth.*

⁶ 1 Sam. iii. 17.

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